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AN EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
FIRST  
EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,  
COMPRISED IN NINETY-THREE SERMONS.

FORMING A SERIES ON EACH OF THE CHAPTERS; AND ON EACH OF THE  
VERSES OF THE SAME: SOME OF THE VERSES UNITED; AND THAT IN  
PERFECT CONFORMITY WITH THEIR PROPER CONNECTION.

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BY

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LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, LONDON.

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“THY WORD IS VERY PURE: THEREFORE THY SERVANT LOVETH IT.”—Ps. CMLX. 140.

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VOL. II.

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Divided into THREE PARTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

## FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,

IN A SERIES OF SERMONS.

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VOLUME THE SECOND.

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### SERMON LII.

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*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

—1 JOHN IV. 1.

IN this Epistle a variety of subjects are contained and set before us. Some of these are dropped, and afterwards resumed. It is necessary to observe this: because this is the case here. It was in the second chapter, the apostle gave an account that there were then, at that time in which he wrote, many antichrists. This was what might most certainly give evidence, that it was the last hour, or very close of the apostolic church state. It had been foretold antichrist should come; and these his fore-runners were now come before him, and would most assuredly introduce him: they being the very spawn out of which he was to be produced. These had been members in the churches: they went out of them, with a design to spread their then new-fangled heresies, far and wide: they were many in number: by their leaving the churches to which they had been united, it fully appeared they were never one in heart, soul, faith and practice with them. The heresy of these heretics very particularly consisted in denying that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: and in corrupting the true doctrine of the Persons in God; hence the apostle says, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." chap. ii. 18, 19, 22, 23. These were the seducers in the then present day: and these are those of whom he is here speaking; *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

In which words we have the following particulars; in the opening the same, we shall it is to be hoped, have the sum and substance of our text explained to the real satisfaction of the spiritual mind.

1. We have the persons addressed, and also the affectionate manner in the which the apostle addresseth them: it is by the word, *Beloved*.

2. The subject he here speaks unto them on: it is concerning preachers, and their doctrines; *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*.

3. It will be considered, how, and by what rules these are to be tried: most undoubtedly it must be by *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*.

4. The necessity of this; *Because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. Whilst every error and heresy against the Person of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity which was then in the world, still remains, there cannot but be reason for all the churches of the saints, to attend closely to this exhortation. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. I am now as entering on the particulars before given,

1st. To observe the persons addressed, and also the affectionate manner in the which the apostle addresseth them: it is by the word *Beloved*.

The sacred writings may be truly said to be a model of perfection, in every sense: the very word before us, with the use here made of it, is a proof of the same. For in giving advice, how necessary is it to do it, in love; especially when it contains caution—To avoid what is wrong—To practice what is right; which is the case here. *Solomon* tells us, *a soft tongue breaketh the bone*. The word *Beloved* so suited the mouth of *John*, the disciple whom *Jesus* loved, that it always comes from his lips with peculiar grace. No doubt, but those whom he here particularly addressed, found it so. We may conceive two meanings included in this word—What they were to God; and what they were to him. As saints, they were *the beloved of God*: all the blessings and blessedness contained in this, were conferred on them, by the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, in Him, the *Beloved*: in whom they were beloved, chosen, blessed with all spiritual blessings, and accepted before all time: in whom, and by whom they were saved with an everlasting salvation in the fulness of time; and out of the love, borne in the mind of the Holy Spirit towards them, as the elect of the Father, and the redeemed of the Son, they were effectually renewed by his operation within them, and upon them, so as to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It was hereby they were openly evidenced to be the beloved of the Lord: and as such the apostle may be considered as addressing them. As also in the term *Beloved*, doubtless may be contained, the expression of his own love in Christ unto them. He loved them in the Lord, and for the Lord's sake: they were dear unto him: they were precious in his views of them, as one in Christ, and one with him, and as the very persons with whom he was to live and dwell, and enjoy everlasting happiness in the immediate presence of Christ, for ever and ever: to these the apostle addresseth himself, saying, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. It was needful they should know this; yea, it was absolutely necessary they should be exhorted to be on their guard, lest they should be injured by any of these; or, the apostle

would never have thus written unto them. Some may say, are not the elect of God secure in Christ? what need is there to administer any cautions and directions unto them? That they are entirely and eternally secure in Christ, this is an immutable truth; yet this does not secure them, ~~so as~~ that they are not liable to fall into sin, and error. Therefore, whilst they are in this our world, they need these cautions, directions, exhortations, and motives which are set before them, in an abundant manner, in, and throughout every one of the epistles, sent to the churches of the saints, and which contain what we style practical godliness. Nothing is more precious to real saints, than the truth as it is in Jesus: they are disposed to buy the same, cost what it may; but they are not disposed to part with the least tittle of it. No; not at the hazard of their lives. It is to them next to Christ himself. The law of Christ's mouth, the truths and doctrines of his everlasting gospel, is sweeter and dearer, and more precious unto them, than ten thousands of gold and silver. Over  
But I proceed to my next particular, which is this,

2. To observe and take particular notice of the subject which the apostle is here speaking of: it is concerning preachers and their doctrines: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.*

The term *spirit* is here used, because all sorts of teachers, be they who, and what they may, are disposed to set up themselves, over others, and to be teachers of others, as professing themselves to be spiritual men, and as having more of the Spirit than all others, and as having a particular message from the Spirit to deliver which none others have. It was so in the apostle's days: the ministers of Satan, like himself, transformed themselves into angels of light: they preached a false Christ: another Jesus, another Spirit, another gospel, than the apostles did: the apostle *Paul* speaking of such as these, says, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." 2 Cor. xi. 13—15. In the same chapter he says to the church of Christ at *Corinth*, "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." verses 1—3. It is very evident the church to whom the apostle thus wrote, was in danger of having a false Christ imposed, in the room and stead of the true Christ, which *Paul* had preached: as also another gospel, another Saviour, and another Spirit. It is also evident, all this danger arose, from false preachers; who passed up and down amongst them, as if they had been the apostles of Christ: such he cautions the saints of *Ephesus* to beware of. He having spoken of the gifts, and ministers which Christ, as ascended into heaven, bestowed, and the end which was to be answered by the same, says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" then adds the end to be answered by all this. "Till we all

come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" to which he further adds; "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." chap. iv. 11—14. A full evidence there were such, even amongst them, which aimed to corrupt the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints; which was one grand, glorious system of truth. This the same apostle, had in his farewell sermon to the elders of this church, foretold would be the case; "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch." Acts xx. 28—31. There were amongst those who were congregated into a church state at *Colosse*, such as by their philosophy had corrupted the true knowledge of the Person of Christ: or the apostle would not need to have thus expressed himself by way of caution: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." ch. ii. 8, 9. Seeing then, that whilst the apostles were present with the churches, there were many false and deceitful ones, who lay in wait on all occasions to corrupt the gospel of the blessed God, and by their false interpretations of the same, to deceive the hearts of the simple, no marvel that *John*, who seems to have been much exercised with the opposition he met with, and with views which he had of the various errors which were coming in upon the outward visible church of Christ, towards the close of his life, should give the saints this advice, and say to them, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* We see from hence, it is one part of the ministry to warn the church of Christ when errors abound; ~~so~~ that they be not surprised into the same: and also that it is needful to describe those persons who are erroneous: to set them forth so as that they may be known. It is not every man, who is a preacher, is a spiritual man: neither are all those who preach, sent by the Lord. In our day, preachers abound: they all of them, are for expressing themselves, to be full of the Spirit; yet very few of these are sent of God: yea, very few of these preach Christ. We have amongst these all sorts of heresies: the old errors which plagued the primitive church are for the substance of them rise amongst us, in this nation. We have those who deny the Trinity in Unity; who explain away both the mystery and doctrine too. We have such as most sadly deface the doctrine of Christ's Person, and so represent Him, by what they say of, and concerning Him, that the true saint is fully persuaded it is not the Christ which he hath seen, in the light of the word, and in the light of the Spirit. It is indeed most solemnly awful, that in the present day, the true doctrine of Christ's Person, as God-Man—the Head and Husband of his church, is lost: that is, there is so little of it known, to any good purpose, that it is treated as a subject about which we need not enquire. The most con-

tended for, is what all agree to style experience; or, as they say, the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart; whilst little is said about the real personality of the Spirit, and His being a Person in the Godhead, co-equal with the Father and the Son: neither is there any clear account given of His part and office in the covenant of grace. Every preacher in our day, has his creed peculiar to himself: the most zealous amongst us, speak from and out of their own hearts, and not from the mouth of the Lord. It is not, *Thus saith the LORD*: but it is, Thus I say: I know it is so: you must be what I am, or you will never be right. Thus many of the most clamorous of such as these, run down all beside: nor is this to be wondered at, seeing they are like *Solomon's fool*, wiser in their own self-conceited views, than seven men which can render a reason. Some of these are by their own profession, *Calvinists*: others of these are *Arminians*: and some of these, are such as belong to one particular party: but they set up for themselves, and are so many plagues to the true organized churches of Christ: and very glad are they, when it is in their power to give them disturbance. It is with all such as I am now speaking of, the case, they are always disposed to cavil, and find fault, with all the settled ministers of Christ, who are in the Churches of Christ, and abide with them, throughout our land: finding fault with their doctrines, and ministrations. Now as all these arise in the Church, and many of them remain in the church, and all of them, when it suits their pernicious views, depart from, and leave the churches and congregations they have been with, and are generally very full of ill will to those from whom they have departed, so it most clearly appears, the apostle's advice is very good, and should be attended to: which is this. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Preachers and their doctrines are to be tried; who they are, what they are: their persons, spirits, and characters, are to be searched into: their ends and motives in preaching should be examined: their doctrines are to be looked into; and should be tried by the revealed word of the living God. So should their gifts, graces and qualifications also; that hereby it might appear what they are: whether of God; or not. This belongs unto the churches of Christ: it is real saints who only are persons fit to be judges in these matters; and this they are not of themselves; nor without proper rules to attend unto, so as that their judgment may be according to truth. So that I shall now enter on the following particular, which is this;

3. To consider how, and by what rules, preachers, and their doctrines are to be tried; which most undoubtedly must be by *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*. I here refer to the words of the apostle *Jude*: who says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." verse 3.

Not every teacher who pretends to be inspired, nor every doctrine delivered to the people, pretended and professed to be received, and delivered by immediate inspiration and revelation from the Spirit of God, is to be received, on account of any such assertions. No, not by any means. The boldness of the men, and the presumption of such declarations, are in themselves, sufficient to prove the fallacy contained in

them. We are not to look for any newly inspired men; nor for any new revelation. The church is subject unto Christ. He is her Head. He hath settled, ordered, and commanded all things concerning her. Her form, order, rules, ordinances, officers, discipline, government, are all from Him: together with all the gifts and qualifications which are peculiar to such as he fits to fill up any office in his house the church. We have a very interesting account of what a bishop, pastor, elder, and preacher must be, and also what are his qualifications, in the first epistle of *Paul to Timothy*. chap iii. 1—7: and also of the qualifications of the deacons in Christ. They must be “grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.” And when all this is found in them, they are to be proved, before they enter upon, and exercise their office. v. 8—10. If all this must be according to divine direction, and the rules and commands for it in the divine word, surely it must then be by the same divine written word; preachers, and their doctrines are to be tried. This must be the only standard we are to go by; and this we are to make use of: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.* They are to be tried by the rules laid down in the word of God. Their persons, their spiritual gifts, their abilities and graces, are all to be brought to this touch-stone: it being for the glory of God, they should be exactly what is therein expressed. Some may say, why if we are too critical and exact we shall not find one in the churches, exactly what they ought to be. It may be so: yet this does not set aside the necessity of their being tried by the word in all these particulars; for one who is not of the flock of God, can never find real delight in feeding the flock of God. Christ only can make a minister of the everlasting gospel. It is He who must bestow spiritual gifts and graces upon him. It is He must call and ordain him: which when he hath done, then the man, examined by the church of Christ, they will find him possessed of those gifts and graces, either in a less or greater degree which are spoken of in the scriptures of the New Testament. It is hereby the Lord fulfils his promise which runs thus; “I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Jer. iii. 15. Not that the Lord bestows the same measure of the Spirit, or an equal proportion of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, on each of his ministring servants: yet he bestows on each of them, all that which is sufficient for them; and they are each of them increased in the same, as they lay themselves out in the exercise thereof, for the real benefit of the church, and to the glory of God. It is a very good criterion to try the spirit of a preacher by, to find out what he aims at—What his spirit is—What he makes his one grand aim—What he would obtain if he could have the very desire of his heart. Christ and his glory, the object and subject, he is continually pursuing? this is well. Is his spirit in this, and this so discoverable, that hereby he, by the manifestation of the Truth, cannot but commend himself to the consciences of his hearers, whether they acknowledge it or not, that Christ by his truth dwelleth in him? This is an undeniable evidence for him, that he is the minister of Christ. Is the one grand aim of all his ministry to exalt Christ, and glorify him? This proves him to be rightly influenced. Does he discover by the substance of his ministry that, if he could have the very desire of his heart, it would be to get

Christ a great Name, to spread his Name, Fame, Praise and Glory, ~~and~~ to perfume the church with the fragrancy of Christ, and magnify the glory of the Three in Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for all the wishes of free, sovereign, unconditional grace? Surely such an one is a true minister of Christ: it is fully evidenced, by his seeking, not his own glory but the glory of Him that sent him. Then as to the doctrine, which proves yea, or nay, whether the preacher is of God, or the criterion by the which he is to be tried: it is as follows—It is the doctrine of faith: by ~~the~~ which term it is expressed; to signify, the whole foundation for our faith in God is contained therein. It is also called our, your, most holy faith: and the faith once delivered to the saints. The whole of which consists in the revelation made of the Nature, Persons, will, covenant, grace, salvation, blessings, graces and benefits, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the everlasting gospel: every title of which is heavenly and divine. It is wholly by revelation from the Lord God himself, we have it in the scriptures of Truth: it is in its grace, doctrines, and ordinances, altogether supernatural. It is alone by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, we receive the true conception and knowledge of it into our minds: hence our Lord saith, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3. Now this is one infallible rule, by ~~the~~ which the spirits of preachers are to be tried—By examining them, and their preaching, by that system of divine truth contained in the written word: and by those doctrines of the everlasting gospel, which contain all the articles of our most holy faith, and which was once delivered unto the saints, and is as immutable as God himself. As it respects the specimen of them, they are, the doctrine of the unity of the Self-Existing Essence, in which, in an incomprehensible manner, not to be described by us, the divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, exist as one essential in the divine Nature, and as Personally distinct in the possession of all the glories, and perfection, and blessedness of Essential and incommunicable Godhead. This is the first article in our creed. It is in the name of the Trinity we were baptized. It is in the faith of the Trinity we worship Jehovah. Of whom *Moses* says, *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. Or The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* We do not attempt to comprehend this mystery. We believe it, and receive the doctrine of it into our minds, because the Lord hath revealed it in his word. No one who denies it, seeing God has revealed it, can be right in his faith in God. Next to this is the doctrine of the Person of Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. The everlasting love of the Father, to the persons of the elect in Him. The covenant of grace, in which the Three in Jehovah engaged before the world was; by ~~the~~ which the elect are saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation. The incarnation, obedience, sacrifice and death of Christ, His burial, resurrection, ascension, priesthood in heaven: His second coming in his kingdom and glory; the state of blessedness the saints are admitted into at death, with the state of blessedness which they will enjoy in their souls and bodies, in their resurrection state; these are the subjects, for the substance of them, which contain the articles of that faith which was once delivered to the saints; and which are to be declared in the preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now such as preach these are of God: the evidence is clear; because they can only know them by the word of God: they can

only receive them into their minds, by the light and inspiration of the Spirit of God : they can only believe them in their hearts, and make confession of these with their mouths, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in them. Therefore such as profess these eternal verities ; preach the same ; are bold to defend them ; and notwithstanding all opposition abide in the true scriptural declaration of these—are of God : and are, and may hereby be known to be of God, as ministers of the everlasting gospel. As such as have nothing to do with these truths, either in their confessions of faith, or in their preaching, as well as also all such, and all those who deny these, or any of these articles of the faith once delivered unto the saints, are not preachers of Jesus Christ. It is by the faith once delivered unto the saints, all preachers are to be tried : if they speak not agreeable thereunto, they are to be rejected, let their names, parts, gifts, and usefulness be what they may. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.* Surely the word of the Lord must be the rule, and the doctrines of Christ, revealed and recorded in the everlasting gospel, must be the standard : and most undoubtedly, every thing which dissents therefrom, cannot but be erroneous. As the next two verses which follow, are descriptive of such as are true, and such as are false preachers, I will say no more here, it being what cannot but come in hereafter : for our present subject does not finally close, but with the whole contained in the sixth verse. I will therefore proceed to my next particular, which is this. To consider,

4. The necessity of trying preachers by the rules, and doctrines of the Lord's most holy and revealed word, which is immutable and infallible ; it is this. *Because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Their name might be *legion* ; for they were many. Our Lord had said, "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders ; insonuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." As this was to be a presage of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, so the apostle knew the number of antichrists in his time, was a certain evidence that the glorious state of the apostolical doctrine and ministring was just expiring. He therefore said, chapter ii. where he first began this very subject which he dropped, and entered on others, and which he here resumes ; *Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

The former term given concerning these was *spirit* ; the present term by the which they are named, is this of *false prophets*. The propriety of these expressions cannot be doubted, seeing the apostle wrote under the Spirit of inspiration ; who by these describes them expressly and exactly what they were. They were in profession spiritual : all such are, in their own conceits, and would be conceived to be more so, than those who are really spiritual. They were prophets : that is, they could in their vain, false way, open and explain scripture. They were false prophets, as they imposed their own notions and opinions of the scriptures on others, according to their own carnal and self-willed apprehensions of the same. They were many ; they were in all places where the true gospel was preached ; hoping there to meet with the greatest success ; they having the conception, that by their cunning and wretched



artifice, they should beguile the minds of the multitude who might be drawn to hear, and give ear unto them, so <sup>that</sup> as they might think more of them, and of what they had to say, than of what they might have heard, and ought to have retained, from what the true ministers of Christ had delivered unto them. Thus, by their good words and fair speeches, to deceive the hearts of the simple. Surely in going through what hath been expressed, it must, it cannot but give us a very striking view of the times in the which, we who are saints and believers in Christ live. What a number of *Lo here*, and *Lo there*, are in our nation at this present time! Some of them pretending to this great view and knowledge of Christ: others to that: yet what comes out of it all? Surely the gospel was never less known since the Reformation, than it is at present. Surely there never was less true godliness in the land, than at this present time. We may with solemn awe, express ourselves with respect to our nation, and the state of religion amongst us, as the prophet *Isaiah* did on the same subject, respecting the times in the which he lived, *Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* There have been, there are yet, many who profess in their way, to be more sublimated with the knowledge of Christ, than all beside. They are preachers, and are in the visible firmament in which they reflect their splendour and majesty, like so many blazing stars, and comets, who fill with astonishment the minds of many, beyond what the fixed stars do. And what comes out of them? What do we hear of many of them? Why this, *It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* How many such have arisen amongst us, since the days of *Mr. Whitfield*, by whom the Lord wrought wonders in this kingdom: what became of many of them? Why they lived agreeably to the views they entertained of the doctrines they preached. Their lusts were too strong for them; so that in the exercise and visitation of the Lord towards them, some have been executed: others forced to retire and live in a state of exile and obscurity: some have been thrown into jail; the best place for them: others banished out of the land. They have all had their cant words and expressions: they have all had their various admirers. But I should fear, that as like loves its like throughout the whole empire of God, so there hath been a very corrupt taint left behind on the minds of such. *These*, says *Jude*, speaking of some such in his days, and of the very false prophets our apostle is writing about, *are clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* The beloved apostle might well therefore warn the church of these: saying, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Surely from what hath been delivered, it must appear that there is an absolute necessity for the churches of Christ, and the people of God, not to believe every one to be sent of God to preach, who presumes himself to think so, and to act on this. It becomes real saints to try the doctrine they hear by the word of God: and the more especially necessary this is, because many false prophets now, as there were formerly, are gone out into the world. The Lord bless what hath now been delivered unto you. Amen.

## SERMON LIII.

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*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*—1 JOHN IV. 2.

THE apostle is pursuing the subject which he was on in the former verse, and he here declares how, and by what means, the Spirit of God might be known, by the outward ministration of men, who professed to be the preachers of the gospel. He had said in the former verse, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world: to which he adds; Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* It is good to be forewarned of such as should by all means be avoided. It is likewise necessary to be informed of those who should be received, and highly esteemed. When we at times, out of zeal to the good of souls, and for the honour of God's Truth, express ourselves to this amount—that such and such ministers and preachers should not be countenanced and encouraged by the attendance and attention of so and so: it very frequently appears to some serious minds, it is dangerous to hear any. They say, if we may not hear such who are so popular, and powerful, whom then are we to hear? Surely you dont mean to pin us up to hear you only. Sirs, this we do not mean: if we give cautions, and even directions whom you should, or should not hear, you may rest assured, it is not out of any party spirit; neither is it from a selfish one: it is out of a concern for the Lord's Truth, which He himself values at a very high rate: it cost the blood of Christ to publish it: and with his own blood he hath ratified and sealed every tittle and article of it: and it is to be delivered in such a way and manner, as his Person, Name, and Salvation may be made known thereby. Therefore we knowing nothing of the creature should be intermixed with it, nor should the glorious mysteries, doctrines, and grace of it be by any means, published by unholy persons, fearing lest they themselves, as they often prove they do, turn the doctrines of the same, into licentiousness, and thereby corrupt the gospel of the blessed God—it is on such accounts, and for these reasons, we at times speak of these persons, and would if possible take you off from hearing them. This is no more than Christ himself hath done, He says, “Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Matt. vii. 15, 16. He also says, *Take heed how ye hear: and, Take heed what ye hear.* And as our Lord warned his disciples not to attend to the Pharisees: so we find the apostles act on the very same principle, and warn expressly against some preachers, and doctrines in their day. The apostle *Paul* closes his farewell sermon to the elders of the *Ephesian* church thus; “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all

them which are sanctified." Acts xx. 31, 32. The truths of the everlasting gospel, are next to Christ himself, in worth and excellency: nay, Christ is contained in them; for it is by them, the Lord the Spirit is pleased to make Him known unto us. The words before us, which I am now to sermonize, contain the following particulars, and which by opening and discussing, we shall have the substance of them explained.

1. The apostle declares, how the beloved of God, may know the Spirit of God, and that He is in such and such preachers: so as that they may for themselves conclude they are true men, and their doctrine is the real doctrine of Christ: this is by the apostle thus expressed, *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God*: in whom, and by whom He speaks, in the administration of his Truth: for this must be the meaning of the apostle, to make it suitable to his, as well as our present subject. This will most clearly appear by reading and joining the former verse with it, which shall be done in the going through this head of our discourse.

2. What such declare in their ministry as it respects the substance, and the subject matter thereof. It is that, *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*. What we are to understand by this, with what is herein and herewith included shall be set forth and declared unto you.

3. That such preachers are of God. *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. These are our present particulars, by the which an attempt will be made to open the text unto you. May the Lord himself be with me, and bless me, and carry me through the same, to your profit, and to his glory and praise. I am

1. To shew and set before you, how the beloved of God, may know the Spirit of God, and that He is in such and such preachers: so as that they may for themselves conclude they are true men, and that their doctrine is the real doctrine of Christ. This the apostle thus expresseth. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. The Spirit of God is known in whom, and by whom he speaks in the administration of his Truth. This must be the meaning of the apostle here, to make it suitable to his, as well as our present subject: which will most clearly appear by reading and joining the former verse with this, and which shall be done: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. Thus you have the connection of the words.

The beloved of God are not to believe every spirit: they are not to take up with every spirit. The beloved of God are to try preachers, by the rules of God's most holy word, and by the truths and doctrines of the same. They are to bring these things to such a point, as to know, who of them are of God, and who are not: the reason for which is given—Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Then how we are to know who are the right and faithful preachers, this is declared, and how the beloved of God may know them. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God*. It is a kind of appeal to them, as well as a piece of information, which they also had an inward apprehension of: they having the Holy Ghost in them, could not but hear his voice, and perceive his presence in others also. He had said so much to them before, in the 2nd chapter of this epistle, v. 20. "Ye have an unction

from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And again, v. 27. " But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you : but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Surely these having the Spirit, might well know the voice of the Spirit of God, in his word, and ministers, and in their ministrations of the same. By the apostle's address unto them, we understand *the Spirit of God*, to be the Holy Ghost : whose concern in the church, is very expressly manifested, in raising up, fitting, furnishing and sending forth men, to preach unto the people, the words of eternal life. It is not therefore contrary to his will, neither is it amiss in any of us, to seek a proof of Christ's Spirit being in his ministers, and of Christ's speaking to us, by his Spirit in their ministry to our hearts. As all who are preachers, make pretensions to the Spirit, and would pretend to be more or less under his influence, so the apostle gives here the certain and infallible evidence and criterion of this qualification. He that preaches Christ, exactly with the revelation made of Him in the everlasting gospel, is of God. He had been speaking as was in the former chapter observed, concerning the antichrists in his days, which subject is here resumed, and he giving the saints of the then present day to understand how they might know them, so as most effectually to avoid them. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.* So he speaks to them—They had the Spirit of God—They knew he was the Spirit of Christ : that his work and office were to exalt Christ. Therefore in the true ministry of the word, by such as the Holy Ghost was in, whom He sent, and by whom He spake, the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ would be glorified : His salvation magnified ; and He would be set forth alone as excellent, and His glory above the earth and heaven. Whilst the apostle might have in view to correct some particular errors which then abounded, concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and some immediate views to benefit the church then, according to the case and state of the same ; yet as all scripture was written for the benefit of the church, and throughout all ages and generations of time, we may, and should seek to profit from what he here says. *Hereby know ye, who are saints, in every age and circumstance the church may possibly be in, who are true preachers, in whom is the Spirit of the living God—They are such as exalt Christ—As set Him up on high. They preach the glory of his Person—His true essential and incomprehensible Godhead, as One in the incomprehensible Essence, Personally distinct from the Father and the Spirit ; yet co-equally, co-essentially, and co-eternally One with the Father and the Spirit in the same Essential Godhead.* When a preacher is sound in this Truth, in which is included the doctrine of the Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, it may be said to the saints who sit under him, *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.* This is the Truth as it is in Jesus : ye may be assured of it. This is the testimony of Jesus, by the Spirit in the word of grace : and this is the testimony we have received concerning Jesus into our hearts, from the word, and by the Spirit of the living God. We are therefore sure he who comes to us in the Name of the Lord, and declares this essential truth of the gospel unto us, hath the Spirit of Christ. We therefore receive him, and pray for the blessing of the Holy Trinity to rest and remain on him : so such as the Spirit of God, makes the means, by their preaching the pure Gospel, of

*7. So they preach also, the perfect ye understand, — Unholy, they be*

exalting Christ in our renewed minds, of leading us out of, and off ourselves, of fixing us on Christ alone for salvation, righteousness, and eternal life, these prove themselves to be, those whom the Lord hath sent: and the Holy Ghost setting his own seal to the truths delivered by them, carries its own evidence with it, that they are the ministers of Christ, and the Spirit hath made them such to us. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.* This is the token, the evidence, the mark by which ye know the ministers of Christ: it was so in *John's* time: it cannot therefore but be the same in our time. The true gospel being the same now, it was then: its truths are the same: altogether sublime and supernatural; they can only be known by such as have the Spirit: they can only be preached as the Spirit gives in the knowledge of them on the mind, from the outward revelation made of them in the gospel. *And* it is the Holy Ghost only who can give a door of utterance, and a door of entrance, so as ministers may speak the wonderful works of God, and saints may speak and make known to the sons of men, the mighty acts of Christ, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. As these are the fruits and effects of a gospel ministry, so such as are instrumental in producing and promoting the same, may certainly be considered as sent by Christ: and churches thus favoured, may herein find great satisfaction; for the apostle saith to them, as truly as he did to those he wrote immediately unto; *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.* You have by the effects which the preaching of the gospel, by those you sit under, has produced in you, and your still continuance in, and abounding in all the fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God, full evidence that the Spirit is in your ministers—That they are of God. When real saints are fully confirmed in the truth of this, respecting such, as they are under, as their spiritual pastors, and guides, it most assuredly leads them to a real spiritual estimation of them. It is here to be observed, that as the Holy Spirit's being in the preacher, is the evidence of his being sent of God; so what he says, and in his preaching declares, concerning the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Father's love, and favour to the persons of the elect in Him, is the outward testimony to the church of God, that such are of the Lord, and their testimony is to be received. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God;* so says the apostle: and so says the whole church of God: we therefore most cheerfully embrace all such; and we reject all beside. The church hath her standard—Her creed—Her rules: and cannot dispense with any of them; because these were all fixed by her Lord and Head. *And* whilst she is guided by the Spirit of Christ; yet He does not guide her but by and according to the rules of the word, either as it respects faith, or practice. Therefore she has an unerring directory at all times to go by; not the Spirit without the word, but the Spirit in and with the word, by the which, she is made wise unto salvation, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. I hope I have cleared up, and given a full account of what is contained in this first particular, equal to what was proposed, as that we have in it, a positive assertion from the apostle, how right preachers are to be known. And also an appeal to saints of the certainty, that what is contained in the same, they knew in themselves the truth of; so that he needed not any further evidence, but the evidence, and assent of their own inward minds to confirm the same; and was therefore willing to rest it here, well knowing the testimony of their own

consciences would most assuredly be a confirmation thereof. I therefore proceed to my next particular to declare, and set forth what

2. Such did in *John's* time declare in their ministry; and of what all the Lord's ministers, as to the subject and substance of their ministry go on to declare to the end of time: by the which they were known in *John's* days, to be sent by the Spirit: and by the which they will be known in and by the churches of the saints, as the sent ministers of God. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*

This was then the grand subject matter of their ministry, and which they chiefly insisted upon. And this, with all resulting from the same, is what all the ministers of God, go on with insisting on. And it is by the subject they then delivered, as well as by the subject which is now delivered, the former were, and the latter are, known to be of God. This is what our apostle, in the words before us positively asserts. I will here again recite both the former, as well as the verse which contains the text; so as that hereby you may have all the satisfaction which may be given you, of the truth of this; *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* The apostle lays the whole weight and emphasis, of the saints in that age, knowing who were the true genuine ministers of Christ, on their confessing that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh. He declares such who made this confession were of God. It will therefore be a part of our explanation of this head, to consider what is implied and contained in the expression, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, it being peculiar to this Epistle. In going through the explanation, it is impossible to avoid the repetition of some things which have been before mentioned. We must here, then, have to explain the principal doctrine of the antichrists in the days of the apostle: of the defence which was made against them, by those who had the Spirit of God—They confessed that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh: this was the proof they were of God. I would therefore here observe, what was one of those principal doctrines of these antichristian apostates in the apostle's days, as it will serve to open what is immediately included in the term, of confessing that *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.* With us, it most certainly comprehends the whole gospel. In *John's* time it contained one particular part and branch thereof, viz., the Incarnation and manifestation of Christ in the flesh. If we look back to the second chapter of this epistle, where the apostle first speaks of the many antichrists in his day, he at the 22nd verse of the chapter asks this question; *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* From which it appears there were persons, who went out of the churches, and advanced this lie—that Jesus of Nazareth was not the true Christ—That Messiah was not yet come—That the people were deceived who thought that Jesus of Nazareth was He. These were the heretics which sprang up in our apostle's day, of whom he in an especial manner speaks. And these corrupted the doctrine of the Personalities of the Father and the Son; so that as this denial was subversive of the whole gospel, the apostle by way of shewing the proper difference and distinction, between the true and false faith,

and betwixt true and false preachers saith, *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*: The whole church of Christ might know this for themselves; it being evidenced to their minds, from the word, and by the Spirit, that the Son of God had been manifested in the flesh—That Jesus of Nazareth was He—That He bore all the criterions of the true Messiah—had wrought in a miraculous manner all which was foretold of Him—had wrought out by his obedience and death, that most complete salvation, which was before signified by the holy prophets and testified of in the scriptures of Truth. So that the truth and authority of the holy scriptures rested, on his being the very identical Person, they spake of, and in whom they received their full acknowledgement. Now as the generality of those whom the apostle wrote to, received their knowledge and belief, of the Person and Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ, from the scriptures, and had the inward knowledge of Christ, from them in their minds, hence arose the propriety of the apostle's address unto them, on these momentous subjects, concerning Christ, and who those were who preached him. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God*. Ye have the true knowledge of Christ inherently in your minds: which is altogether agreeable with the outward revelation of Him in the word of his grace. Ye are thereby judges in this very case. Ye cannot but know the true preachers of Christ from all others in the world. Ye cannot fail of having a clear perception of these. You most assuredly know the Spirit of God in their ministry; and also in, and by the subject which they hold forth in the same: this is self-evident in it: *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. I would here propose to you, who wish to have the first and genuine interpretation of these words, this question. Can there be any thing more easy, and natural, as it respects the subject in its simplicity, than what hath been before suggested?—That Christ's being come in the flesh, referred to our Lord's incarnation—That the truth of this was one great end of the ministry of the apostles—That the steady attachment of the witnesses of Christ to this fundamental truth, was complete proof of their being on the Lord's side: so that every spirit, every teacher who abode and preached this apostolic truth, carried hereby full evidence with him, that he was of God. His confession that Jesus Christ who was crucified at Jerusalem, who was taken down from the tree, and laid in the sepulchre, whom God raised from the dead, and seated him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins, was the true Christ of God: of whom all the prophets testified, that whosoever believeth on him should receive remission of sins—The true, open knowledge of Him, as such, was full and clear proof that these persons were of God. This I do apprehend to contain the first meaning of the words before us. *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. And I conceive what hath been delivered, serves most fully to confirm the same. If he was to come, He must have existed before He came. If he was already come, then he must have accomplished the prophecies which foretold this great event. If so, then it must have contained the whole essence of all contained in the sin of unbelief, to deny this: so that none of the preachers of Christ, could possibly be found amongst the number of those who denied this. Now whilst the

apostle wrote for the benefit of the church of Christ which existed in his time, so he also did for the good of the Church of Christ, which should exist, which now exists, and which will exist down to the Second coming of Christ in his kingdom, and in his glory. We therefore, whilst we have not with us, nor in any of the churches, at least to our knowledge, those, or such, as deny that our Lord Jssus Christ hath been in the flesh; yet we have in the words before us, such expressions as may lead us to the true summary of these doctrines which sufficiently evidence to us, as partakers of the Spirit of God, who those are whom we should receive, and acknowledge as the real ministers of Jesus Christ: as also that we have in ourselves evidences of the truth of the same. Surely such as retain, and maintain, who preach and teach the Lord Jesus Christ, in the truth and purity of his gospel, and agreeably with the revelation made of Him therein, must be accounted His; and cannot but be looked on, and received as such, by those who have Christ formed in their minds, from the revelation which is made of Him in the Scriptures of the Spirit, by the Holy Ghost. Such may be addressed as those are in the text: *Hereby know ye the Spirit of Christ: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* Ye have an inward evidence in your own souls of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, who beareth witness to your spirits that ye are the children of God, that what such and such declare in their ministry of the Person, love, work, offices, fullness, and perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his interest in his people, of his relation to his people, of his salvation of his people, is the truth of God. You cannot but hear such with real delight, who give you such scriptural statements of the Father's everlasting love, in Christ, to your persons—Of the eternal fixation of the same—That it is the act of his will, who is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Such as give clear accounts of the Personality of the Holy Ghost, and of his covenant part and office in the economy of grace, and all this from the written word; surely you, who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, cannot but acknowledge such to be the Lord's sent servants. It is hereby know ye the Spirit of God, in the ministrations of his servants. Every preacher, who preacheth the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's love, and testimony in the word, to these truths of the living and everlasting God, they are of God: which brings me to my last head of this present discourse.

3. To shew such are of God. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*

It should be observed here, the apostle comes down to the saints. It is *ye*, not we, know: it is, *Hereby ye know the Spirit of God.* There can be no mistake in Him. He is immutable, essential, and incomprehensible. He searcheth all things—all hearts. They are all opened and naked in his sight and to his view. Such is his infinite knowledge, that as one in the Godhead, co-equal with the Father, and the Son, he searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1 Cor. ii. 10. As the Spirit of God dwelleth in us, we have the mind of Christ: each believer in Jesus hath: not in the same measure; nor to the same degree; yet the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration, these are one and the same in all who are the called of God in Christ Jesus. It is so with all the ministers



of Christ Jesus: they are all taught, one as truly as the other, by the same Spirit; yet they have not all an equal measure of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but are most admirably fitted for that station in the church which they are to fill up, and shine forth in. They having the Spirit of Christ, are led into the Truth as it is in Jesus: so that they do not speak at uncertainty about what they deliver concerning him. That which they have seen and heard, of and concerning the Person, the glory, the love, and salvation of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God, with all which they have received into their minds, of and concerning Him, from the word, and by the anointings of the Holy Ghost, they cannot but declare: and it is hereby the churches of the saints, know and perceive the Spirit of Christ in them. There is that spoken by them, concerning the secrets of the Most High, which none could be admitted into the knowledge of, but by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And he is pleased to give them, such an inward intuitive knowledge of the same, as that there are seasons, when they speak in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; so as that what is said of the sound of the wings of the Cherubims, in the visions of the prophet *Ezekiel*; was heard, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. They often so express themselves, as the secrets of men's hearts are made manifest: and some hereupon fall down, and worship God, and go away, and report that God is in such a ministry, with such a minister, in such a church, and with such a people, of a truth; which is an evident proof of the omniscience and omnipresence of the Holy Ghost: and a full evidence how he presides over, and is present with, and puts forth his power in the assemblies of his saints. Now such ministers as these, carry their credentials with them, that they are the Lord's—*That he hath made them able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* From hence it may most safely be concluded, the Lord doth in all ages, and will to the end of time, raise up and place in his churches, and bestow upon his people, such ministers as shall be of real spiritual use, benefit, and advantage unto them. Thus I have endeavoured to open the text, and have gone over the particulars of the same, and would here again recite the words of the text, that it may not be wholly forgotten by you; *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* The word *confession* must stand here for the word *preaching*—That it must mean the same; for otherwise such as need instruction cannot be instructed and benefited. Let a man be ever so full of the knowledge of Christ, it is only as he imparts the same to others, by his confessions, preachings, writings, and conversations, that others can be profited. It is very necessary then, for a preacher to have this qualification to fit him for his sacred employment—to be apt to teach: a minister of Christ, should be always communicating the knowledge of Christ, by all ways, and means: he should make it his whole study and employment, how to lay out his whole time for, and study to be improving and edifying the church of Christ: and this according to the ability which God hath given, that God in all things may be glorified, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Now all ministers having not the like gifts, they cannot exercise themselves all in one and the same way. There are who are eminently gifted in prayer, and are very near in their approaches to the Lord in their exercises and

discharge of the same. They often do exercise such gifts and graces in worship, as serve to be patterns to many of the saints, who find it a real ordinance to join in this worship with them. Some are most eminently qualified with gifts for preaching the word, both in season, and out of season, to reprove, correct, exhort, and this, with all long suffering and doctrine. It becomes such to make a constant use of gifts; to lay themselves out in the proper exercise of them, that the Lord's end in bestowing these upon them may be answered. It should be remembered that whatsoever the gifts the Lord bestows, they are all Church property, and should be laid out to serve the church. Some have a very blessed gift of explaining scripture; by taking a portion thereof; giving its various parts, and so explaining, and opening the same, as to render it most truly advantageous. Those who have such a gift, should lay themselves out in the improvement of the same, as that they might be beneficial thereby. Some can enter very deeply into soul cases, exercises, temptations, desertions, and the various assaults of Satan, and so state all this, and bring the word of God, in its holy varieties, so exactly suited to each, and every one of these, as cannot but be most truly beneficial to the Lord's flock. This is a very peculiar gift, and it is of great service in the church and house, and to the family of God. Some are admirably qualified to be helpers of each other's faith. This is a most precious gift. All these meet not in one man; nor is any one to be envied for the gift he possesseth. They should all be used for the benefit of the whole flock of God. Some have an admirable gift in writing on spiritual and divine subjects, by means of which it is, Truth runs and is glorified. Having therefore gifts differing one from another, let us be thankful for those which are bestowed on us, and seek the glory of God, and the good of saints in laying the same out for their benefit. And now I will draw to a close, and cite the first and second verses of the chapter, once more, together; *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* May the Lord the Spirit cast his own light, and influence, on his word of Truth; and bless what hath been delivered and set before you, so far as agreeable with his most holy mind and will, as expressed in the word of grace. Amen.

## S E R M O N L I V .

*And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.—1 JOHN iv. 3.*

As in the former verse, the apostle declared to the saints, how they themselves knew the Spirit of God was in the preachers of the gospel—because they one and all confessed Christ was come in the flesh, and that Jesus of Nazareth was He: so he here declares that every spirit, who instead of confessing this, denied this most clear, self-evident, and important truth, that Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: such were never sent by the Spirit of God. The truth of God was not in them: so far from this, they were possessed with the spirit of antichrist—of the very antichrist of which these saints had heard that it should come; and from these here spoken of, it was evident, that even now already this very antichrist was in the world. It was so, and there ever will be, except in the state of the Church, which we style latter-day glory, an opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his glory as revealed in the everlasting gospel. No sooner was Christ made known in the first revelation of Him, by the first declaration of grace, and set forth in instituted worship in the garden of *Eden*, but it became the study of Satan how to corrupt the same, by his leading off the minds of men from Christ, to things which could not profit. The first instance upon record is in the case of *Cain* and *Abel*: the former brings the first-fruits as an offering to the Lord; the latter brings a lamb for an oblation, which was a very solemn memorial of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are informed by an apostle, that *Abel's* act of worship was an act of faith; which being opposed to *Cain's*, implies his was an act of unbelief. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Heb. xi. 4. The true knowledge of Christ, and his worship seems to have been continued by *Seth*, of whom *Eve* at his birth said, “God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.” He had a son whose name he called *Enos*: and it is said, “Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.” Gen. iv. 25, 26: which seems to imply, there had been an awful departure from the true worship of the Lord. In the account given of the occasion of the Deluge, it is expressly said, “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Gen. vi. 12. It is not their way, but it is God's way, these are said to have corrupted. Now God's way of access to us, and the only way we can have access to God, is by Jesus Christ alone: and the antediluvian sinners, made nothing of Christ. They corrupted the doctrine of Him, and the true worship of Him: if it were not so, how could it be said of them, “that

all flesh had corrupted God's way upon the earth?" It must be acknowledged, Satan hates Christ, in the revelation of Him, in his Person, salvation, worship, and the true acknowledgment of Him, in his Divine Personality, and Essential Deity; with an immutable hatred: his very fall began in this: and all his present sinfulness is hereby manifested: so that after the Deluge, as *Noah* began the worship of God by building an altar, and offering burnt offerings on it, and thus expressed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, who was to bruise the old serpent, called the devil, so the devil as soon as opportunity made way for it, set himself on corrupting the doctrine of the Trinity; which once corrupted in ever so small an iota, we cease to have the true Christ of God. I must confess, I do conceive those styled *Hutchinsonians*, give the best account of the origin and what the idolatry consisted in, so much spoken of in the Old Testament: it originated from observing the agency in Nature, and the powerful operation of the agents in nature, Fire, Light, and Spirit, or Air: these were by the Creator of them, designed to be outward memorials of his Self-Existence, and of the distinct modes of the existence in the incomprehensible Jehovah, so ~~as~~ that thereby light might be cast upon the glorious display of the system of grace, in the exhibition of the same, set forth in the primary Cherubim, set up by the Lord God, at the east of the garden of *Eden*: and this design, Satan with all his cunning set himself to withstand: and leading the minds of the postdiluvians to understand the influence the trinity in nature had on, and throughout the whole system of it, he corrupted some of their minds, and led them by little and little, to the worship of these. Thus he led them off from the true worship of the Holy Trinity, who had revealed themselves in Christ, and made known by revelation the everlasting covenant, which obtained between them before the world was, to worship the agents in nature. This began openly in the building *the tower of Babel*; which was built to the Names; or to the Heavens—To worship them: and this was the first open breaking forth of idolatry. From hence the improvements upon it, as those who were scattered over all the earth, began. ~~And~~ as they grew under the influence of Satan, more and more corrupt in their minds, so the idolatry of the nations of the world increased: and from some broken fragments of scripture, the devil corrupting the same, was all the idolatry throughout the world framed and founded: it was on this same corrupt doctrine of the Trinity, all the idolatry introduced amongst the professing people of God, was founded. It consisted either in setting aside one, or more of the Persons in Deity: or, in corrupting the Sacrifice of Christ, by offering their sons and their daughters to devils; or, in setting up a false Christ: hence that solemn sentence is delivered. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Moloch; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Moloch, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death—he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD shall be put to death." Lev. xx. 1—3. xxiv. 15, 16. *Jeroboam* the son of *Nebat* who

made Israel to sin, brought in what is styled by some the *bull heresy*. He set up his calves; the one at *Bethel*, the other in *Dan*: and it had but one of the figures of the Cherubim in the same. Hereby was a renunciation of the Son, and Spirit: thus the doctrine of the Trinity was corrupted by him, and his adherents. It was the corrupting the scriptures of Truth, by the false glosses of the scribes and pharisees, that the bulk of the Jews were ~~imitators~~, and received such false apprehensions of Christ into their minds and concerning the Messiah, that when our Lord was manifested in the flesh they universally rejected him, in the body and bulk of the nation. The apostle saith, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John i. 11, 12. ~~It was~~ from corrupting the scriptures of Truth, wrong thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ, had been entertained in the minds of men concerning Him: and it was from returning ~~back~~ to these, after a profession of Christ had been made, concerning his being the Messiah, the Holy One of God, so many turned to be apostates. This was the original of the antichrists in *John's* time; and they were, and might be most easily discerned by this, that they renounced the true Christ, by denying he was come in the flesh. As the apostle had in the verse before said, *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: so he here saith, And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* These two verses set in contrast with each other, reflect the light of what is contained in them, as fully to explain the same, so that they leave very little more to be said of them; yet as I have read these words for my text, *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world,* I will aim to divide the text, and set it forth under the following particulars.

1. What is to be understood by *not confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*. This may most easily appear by considering what is contained in *confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*. I have dwelt largely on this in the foregoing sermon, I shall therefore touch but briefly on it.

2. That such are not of God. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God*. Under this head, it may be considered, that the tendency of all preachers, in the doctrines advanced by them, should and ought to be considered and examined into, that we might know how far they were, and are of God. Because the apostle most assuredly wrote for the benefit of the people of God, in all ages, and throughout all succeeding periods of time.

3. The apostle asserts, that *every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is that spirit of antichrist, whereof, says he, ye have heard that it should come*: it had been foretold, and the churches had been informed of the same: not only by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Prophecy, who is declared by *Paul* to have uttered the following, and it concerns the state of the Church in the last times; "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from

the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." And surely the denial of Christ's Incarnation, must be one of these.

Lastly. That in *John's* days this spirit of antichrist was come, and it was very discernable in the spirit which actuated, and influenced some of those in that day, to deny this most important and essential truth of the gospel, *God manifested in the flesh*. *And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*. May the Lord lead me to fill up each of these particulars, to your real profit and satisfaction: and to begin with the same, I am

1. To consider what is to be understood, by *not confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*. This may most easily appear to any of us, by considering what is contained in *confessing that Jesus Christ is come*. As this hath been the chiefest part of the former sermon, and is the positive part of the subject, and our present subject being the negative, I shall speak but very little of the former, for the reason assigned, and dwell chiefly on the latter. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God*.

I might observe the words are a solemn assertion of the apostle: delivered in this form to impress the importance the more on the mind. By not confessing that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, amounted to a denial of His having been incarnate: whoever does so, let that spirit, that preacher, be who he may, let his gifts, his preaching, his appearance in life, manners, conversation, temper, and conduct be what it may, he is says our apostle, not of God. He is a subverter of the whole gospel: it entirely falls to the ground, if this be a truth, that our Jesus was an impostor; and if we believe that of Him, and concerning Him, which we have no warrant from the Scriptures for. I would here repeat it—herein lay the damnable doctrine of these apostates from the Truth, whom our apostle here terms antichrists; they denied our Lord Jesus Christ to be the true Messiah; just as the Jews do to this very present day. It seems there were many of these: they all united in this untruth: they could not preach but they must express this untruth. They were therefore the plagues to the churches to whom they had belonged: they were the means of spreading error and heresies wheresoever they came: what they declared, was with a design to the utter overthrow of the whole gospel as delivered by the apostles, who declared Christ was come, and that Jesus of Nazareth was He. The others, in perfect defiance, and with direct malice in their minds, to this very essential Truth, on which all the faith of the New Testament saints was founded, insisted upon it that Messiah was not yet come. Of these it is the apostle is here speaking; and of them he says, *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God*. This being the genuine interpretation of the text, and as it respects my own light and judgment of the same, and as this hath been more fully opened, and set forth in the former sermon, I therefore conclude this first head of my discourse, and pass on to the next.

2. To shew that such *that confess not that Jesus Christ is come are not of God*. Our text is this, *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God*. It is easily to be seen, how these words are connected with the former: which as they prove that such are of God, who preach and declare Christ is come in the

flesh, so these declare that such as are the deniers of this, prove themselves not to be of God.

I do not know of any in our day, or land, who deny that Christ hath been incarnate, and in our world, so I shall not charge any with this crime. The *Quakers* are treated by *John Bunyan*, in his accusations against them with this. And *Dr. Goodwin* seems to be ready to charge those, whom he calls *Manifestarians*, by whom it is supposed he must mean the *Ranters*, from whom the *Quakers* sprung, with being for a Christ in the spirit, with a denial of Christ in the flesh: yet as I know not what the particular views and doctrines of these were, and still are, I shall by no means have any, no, not the least reference unto them. Still as it must be acknowledged, that the apostle's writings were not only for the saints in the day in ~~the~~ which he lived, but for all future times—Then, under this head, it may, as congenial with it, and as included therein, be considered; that it becomes the church of Christ, as the church of Christ, to consider and examine the doctrines of all preachers, and what they advance: that it may be known how far, and what real evidence there is given that, both the doctrines advanced, and the persons who have advanced them are of God. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.* It hath been suggested, that for my own part, I know of no sect amongst us, who deny the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The *Papists* acknowledge it: so do the very *Turks*: which I suppose is the reason of *Dr. Goodwin's* saying, that the Name of Christ is as much now in the world as it ever was. The Jews are the only ones who deny it; because the very things, evils and calamities are at this present time, which our Lord in his incarnate state foretold. So that their very rejection and denial of this Truth, is, in its proper place, a full proof and evidence against them, that Christ hath been actually incarnate, and hath completed the putting away of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. It has been before noticed, that the corruption of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, was the originality of all the ancient idolatry. And it was from hence, with the false interpretations put on the scriptures of Truth, by the scribes and pharisees before our Lord's coming, and whilst our Lord was in his incarnate state, which prejudiced the nation of the Jews, so as to blind their eyes, and harden their hearts against Him. So to the present time, and days in the which we live, the corrupting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is the ground and original cause of every error which is advanced amongst us. The old jewish church, in her patriarchs, prophets, and believing members, believed this doctrine: they worshipped God in the true confession of it; and gloried herein. This appears most fully and clearly, in all that is recorded, from the first chapter of *Genesis*, down to the close of the prophecy of *Malachi*. The New Testament is founded on the same essential Truth; and the apostles and followers of the Lamb, all acknowledged the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and believed in the Divine Persons, and worshipped the Divine Persons as existing in the Divine Essence, as the one true, living, everlasting, and incomprehensible God. The church of England, of Scotland, of Dissenters, both independents and baptists, have given us accounts of their knowledge and belief of the same. *Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Owen, Mr. Joseph Hussey, Dr. Gill*, with divers others, have all of them wrote in defence *written* of this doctrine; yet again and again, we have persons arising up, who

profess to be offended at this most essential Truth. They ask, do you understand what you say concerning it? I should not scruple to say yes; we do. When we so say, what do we absolutely mean? This—that we understand the doctrine of it, as set before us in the word of God: we do not profess to know the mystery of it: but we profess to know the doctrine of it; and that as revealed in the word. We also worship God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and some of us have been baptized, and we do baptize in the Name of the Holy Trinity, and this as the very door and entrance into the church of God. We have been led to know how the Holy Trinity stand engaged to us, and interested in us, by an everlasting covenant. ~~It is~~ in the dispensation of the covenant of grace, and in our views and apprehensions thereof, we have communion with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit. It is in the present day, to be greatly lamented, very few are sound in the doctrine of the Trinity: very few are concerned to know, and be kept steadfast in the doctrine of it; most look on it merely as a speculative point; and some there are who not only neglect it, but most awfully degrade it. Now from the words of my text, it appears to me necessary for the church of Christ, to consider and examine the doctrines of all preachers—what they advance: that it may be known how far, and what real evidence there is given, that both the doctrines advanced, and the persons who have advanced them are of God. The apostle saith; *every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.* If a man preaches Christ for salvation, let the foundation on which he rests all this, be examined: what is the origin of it? From whence does it flow? what is the foundation to bear it up? Does he found it all upon the everlasting covenant, between the Father and the Son? Does he acknowledge the Spirit's part and office in the same? Then he believes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: for salvation is the fruit and effect of an everlasting covenant. ~~And~~ each of the Divine Persons, is equally engaged in it: ~~and~~ the love of the whole Three shines forth upon, and into the souls of the Elect, in the manifestation and revelation of the same; so that the man who preaches thus, can aim at nothing thereby, but the good of the church of God, and the glory and honour of each of the Persons in the Godhead, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. So in all other parts and branches of divine Truth, it should be examined by the church of the living God, on what they are all founded: how they all harmonize: what they all tend unto: and if they are agreeable with the revealed will of God. This will be the means of discerning whether the preacher, is a workman not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth: and if he may be looked upon as of God. Such as confess Christ is come in the flesh in our time, have to preach and set Him forth as the true *Immanuel*: as *God manifested in the flesh*: His end and design in his coming into the world; with the great work which he wrought in our world; together with the everlasting virtue and perfection of his Righteousness and Sacrifice—These are men of God; on our examining and finding these doctrines preached by them, in every part and branch of the same. ~~And~~ a true examination into these, with their spirits as exercised in the discharge of their office and services in the ministration of the everlasting gospel, is necessary for the Church, that they having full satisfaction that such are of God, they may give honor to such as it belongs unto. All this was necessary in the apostle's time, because



the truths concerning Christ's Person were then contradicted by the heretics of that age: and it must be equally necessary for the Church of Christ in all ages, seeing there will never more, or greater heresies arise, than those which have been already: nor are there any new ones now: let them be what they may: they are only old ones revived; yet through the subtilty of the devil, they pass with the people at large, as if they were quite new. In our times, we have an abundance of new-fangled notions and opinions; yet they are of ancient date. It is only the devil new reviving his old lectures, and putting his fresh gloss upon the same. This leads me to my next particular, which is this:

3. To observe the apostle's assertion, which is—That *every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is that spirit of antichrist, whereof (says he) ye have heard that it should come.*

As the doctrine of *Unitarianism*, was so generally received by the Jewish people, before the coming of our Lord, so it laid the foundation for their corrupting the doctrine of Christ's Person, and Messiahship: hence it was he was universally rejected by them; whilst the scriptures of the prophets, and the writings of *Moses* were full proofs against them, and fully testified that their predecessors, all the whole church of God before them, believed in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Old Testament, from the commencement of it, to the very close of it, is full of this sublime Truth. It expresseth that the Father is almighty, that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, that the Holy Ghost is equal with the Father and the Son, and is as eternal as the Father and the Son—That they exist Personally and co-equally in the One Self-existing Godhead, and by Essential Union. So that the one is not before the other, but are one as to the Unity of the Divine Nature, whilst they are Personally distinct in that incomprehensible Essence. This is what is to be believed, because the Lord hath revealed the same: without it we cannot make out those acts which are recorded in the word of grace, concerning the Father's everlasting love, the Person and Glories of Christ, the love and economy of the Holy Spirit, in the revelation of grace. We are not called on to understand the mystery of the Trinity: nor to explain it: we are only called upon to receive and believe the doctrine of the same, as revealed in the written word, and to acknowledge the truth of it, by believing in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and trusting in the everlasting covenant, which the Father conceived in his infinite mind, which the Son engaged to carry into execution, and the Holy Ghost engaged to reveal, and bring the heirs of glory to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> knowledge of. It cannot be consistent with any part of the gospel, to deny either of the Persons in the infinite Godhead. It is one thing not to understand the doctrine as revealed: another thing to reject the doctrine revealed. Now every spirit, that is every spiritual man, who professeth himself to be sent of God to preach Christ is to be examined by the standard of God's word. If he be a total neglecter of holding forth the concern of the Three in Jehovah in Salvation, he is not right. If any spirit, or preacher, be a depraver of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, such an one is an antichrist. This is the apostle's doctrine. He saith, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." chap. ii. 22. The denial of the Father and the Son, involves with it, the denial of the Holy Ghost: one cannot be denied but they all are. Now it is most surprizing, that in the very times in which *John* lived, antichrist should arise, and so far

prevail, as that such as had been received into the churches of the saints should renounce Christ, and declare the true Christ had not yet appeared! As the apostle says, *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God*; he adds, *and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come*. It had been foretold: the churches had been warned thereof. This must have been in the sermons and writings of the holy apostles: so that by referring to the same, the saints might easily perceive, what they had been informed of, was now evidenced and realized to them, in those very persons now amongst them, and who were daily making inroads upon them, by their awful declaration that Christ was not yet come, and that the apostles, and the whole of their congregations were deceived. May I not carry the apostle's assertion concerning these antichrists, that they were not of God; each of these individually—and he had full and sufficient ground for saying, *ye are not of God*, and of the whole sum total of them, *they are not of God*: and ye may know the truth of this, by their opposition to Christ, and his gospel—May I not carry all this to every one in our day, who depreciates any of the doctrines of the everlasting gospel: let this be done in what way soever, so far as it diminishes the glory and equality of the Divine Persons in the Godhead, or eclipses the glory of free, royal, and sovereign Grace, in eternal and personal, unconditional election in Christ, to eternal Life and Glory:—or is a reflection on the honour of Christ, of his being the Author of eternal Salvation, and that all his people are saved in Him, with an everlasting salvation:—or to a denial of the Person of the Holy Ghost, with his renewings and operations on the minds of the elect; I conceive these all amount in their nature, kind and degree, to antichristian doctrines: and such may be styled antichrists; that is, they are all of them against Christ: either directly, or indirectly; let the same be, with design, or without design. Such as are not for Christ must be against him; as in like manner, they that are not against him, in their preaching, must be for him. I might further add, all such as these, the churches of Christ have been warned of, and warned against. The proof of this is evidenced in the writings of holy men, and those who have had names of being men of renown in the churches of the saints. I here refer to those ministers of Christ, who lived in *Oliver Cromwell's* time; in ~~the~~ which all sort of errors were set on foot, and each, and every one of them most ably refuted. ~~And~~ in their writings in defence of each, and every truth of the gospel, ~~and~~ in their open confutation and rejection of every error, we have such information, as by the blessing of the Lord upon it, is sufficient to warn and guard us, in this age, against all sorts and kind of heresies. I hope I have sufficiently cleared my text, and also my judgment of the same, and that so far as is suitable to a kind of commentary, which is intended to cast a general light on the same. The Holy Ghost had by the mouth of *Paul*, warned the Church in his time of the coming of the great antichrist: no doubt but he might also suggest, that out of the various errors, which were then existing about the Person of Christ, God-Man, was the substratum from which, the great antichrist would arise. If these things are so, then let us avoid every thing which is contrary to sound doctrine, and every one of those errors which are contrary to godliness. I proceed to my next particular, which is,

Lastly. To observe, that in *John's* day, this spirit of antichrist was

come; and it was very discernable in the spirit, which actuated and influenced, some of those in that day, to deny this most essential and important truth of the Gospel, *God manifest in the flesh. And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

It is most astonishing to consider, that no sooner doth the light shine, even the true light of everlasting life, but immediately the untruth which is in its own nature, the very thing to obscure the same, ariseth nearly about the same time with it. All errors and heresies, let them be of what nature, or kind soever, spring out of the truths, or the perversion of them: accompanying the same as the shadow does the substance, of which it is the very feeble resemblance. If the Son of God had not been *incarnate*, and thereby been *God manifested in the flesh*, there could have been no denial of this: therefore the devil set upon the unregenerated professors of the gospel in the days of *John* and the rest of the apostles, to deny this fact. Yet it was such an immutable truth, that is is marvellous it should be denied; for it must have been almost, if not altogether, in that very age, the Lord Jesus had been in the world: in ~~the~~ which, as it respected both his miracles, and doctrines, he wrought and spake as never man did. Yet the evil heart of unbelief, and the infidelity of the then present times were such, that the minds, even of some who had professed faith in Christ, were apostatized from Him, so as to deny Him to be the true Christ of God. Whilst this must have been a severe blow on the apostles, and the true churches, yet neither the one, nor the other, gave up their faith in this most essential truth, and article of faith. All the apostles did, or our apostle doth, is to give warning of them—To point them out expressly—To declare what their vile doctrine consisted in—To prove them therefrom to be antichrist—That they were now come—That what had been declared by way of warning, caution, by way of prophecy concerning these, was now so openly realized, that these were most notoriously to be seen and known. *Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* It must have been a most painful sight to the beloved of God, to perceive and discern this most diabolical spirit, working to promote this most tremendous error: which in its nature and consequences, was to the utter subversion of the truth of the Gospel. It did not come in, neither was it now propagated without the knowledge of the apostles. They all warned the churches of all the evil contained in it: this was all they could do: they could not root out the error: nor could they hinder men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the Truth, from receiving the same, and being carried away with it. It should from hence be observed, no reflection ought to be cast, on the ministers of Christ, or the churches of Christ, because there may arise errors, or heresies, even out of some of those who have worshipped, or do worship with them. No doubt but all the ministers of Christ, ought most clearly to state, the fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel, as clearly as possible, with the record concerning them, in the word, in the which they are revealed.

✕ Every error and herey should be stated also: the saints should be warned against them, and also against such as hold them: and when any in the community hold them, they should be addressed concerning the same, and if they renounce the same, well: if they do not, they should be with-

✕ I have given the order. To accuse and punish the crimes of men  
with all the falsehood which has been touched is not made to do good.

drawn from. The apostle says, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." Titus iii. 10. There is no error or heresy but is of the devil. May we therefore be on our guard. The Lord save us from every one: let them be immediately against the truths of the gospel, or only as those which serve to weaken any of them. Amen.

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## S E R M O N L V.

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*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*—1 JOHN IV. 4.

As the apostle had been giving the persons to whom he wrote, evidence of true and false preachers, expressly declaring who they were who preached the true Christ of God, and who they were that did not—Those being antichrists who confessed not that Christ was come in the flesh; so he here observes how the saints overcame these, and were hereby distinguished to be of God: it being wholly to be attributed to his free grace alone, and to his power put forth in their minds. The heresies of the then present day, consisted in denial of the Personality and Godhead of Christ. This is said to be the damnable heresy of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*—The one denied the humanity, the other the Deity of our most adorable Lord: and others there were who denied that the true Messiah had been manifested. Against all such he warneth them, saying, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* He then addresseth his beloved friends in Christ, and saith to them, with the greatest affection, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* As in the former verses, he plainly expresseth himself to this effect—that such as denied the Deity and Personality of Christ—the truth of his humanity; and, as some then did—that he was not the true Messiah: were false prophets—That they were not of God—That they were antichrists; so he here positively asserts, those whom he here addresses were of God: which must most assuredly have been very strengthening and encouraging unto them. It may be, these were the preachers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are here spoken of: it seems so from the two following verses; and as such, he seems to draw a line of distinction between them, and the others of whom he had been speaking—The one were of God, the other were of the world: the doctrine of the one overcame the doctrine of the other. The reason why the children of God overcame those antichrists was, *because he that is in you,* (says the apostle,) *is greater than he that is in the world.* To explain and open

these words, I will aim to set the substance of the same before you, in the following particulars.

1. I will observe the loving manner, with which the apostle speaks, and goes on with his present subject to the saints he writes unto. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them.*

2. In what way, and by what means they were overcome. This must have been by the saints' continuation in the truths of the everlasting gospel, and the ordinances of the same, by the which a full and outward proof and evidence was given that Christ was come in the flesh.

3. The reason how, and why it was they overcame. It was owing to the Holy Spirit who was in them. He was more mighty to maintain Truth in their minds, and to keep them in the Truth, than the spirit of error was to prevail against them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Of these in their order, as the Lord shall be pleased to direct. I am

1. To observe the affectionate and loving manner, with which the apostle speaks, and goes on with his present subject, to the saints he writes unto. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them.*

There is nothing wins more on the mind, even of such as are born of God, than real and genuine affection; it is a mean of reanimating the love which had been before mutually, in one spiritual friend to another: and as this was from an apostle of Christ, who was himself remarkably distinguished for the exercise of the same, it could not but reflect the more strongly, and with the greatest energy on their minds. His assertion, *Ye are of God*, could not but carry apostolical weight and authority with it: they must have been quickened and refreshed therewith: they well knew it was not spoken out of flattery, or to lead them to rest hereupon, as their evidence of the same. They knew well for what intent it was spoken; it was to encourage them, by proving to a positive demonstration the evidence of this, which lay in their overcoming the antichrists, and their false pernicious doctrines. *Ye are of God.* It seems to me, and by looking at the preceding verse, and on to the end of the sixth verse, the whole here delivered is spoken to preachers, in that then very present day: who because they preached Christ as the true Messiah, and in all the glories of his Messiahship, with all the glorious fruits and consequences of his incarnation, work, and offices, did thereby plainly prove themselves to be the ministers of the Lord and Saviour: so that I should like to consider the words, as in this point of view, to be delivered thus, as they here stand connected with what goes before them, and follows after. He had before warned them, not to believe every spirit: not to take up with every man, who professed himself to be immediately sent forth to preach, by the Spirit. No; let such an one be tried by the standard of God's revealed will, in the written word, and also with every article of the faith which was once given to the saints. Let the Spirit of God be attended unto, in what such express in their testimony concerning Christ: let this also be compared with the scriptures of Truth. And seeing such, let his pretensions to the Spirit's teachings be what they may, *who confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world; and ye have been kept from renouncing the Truth as it is in Jesus, it hereby most*

clearly appears, that, *Ye are of God*. It is further proved by you as *little children*, and as such I address you, for your simplicity in the faith; and also to shew you my most sincere affection for you. It might here be noticed, the apostle had so expressed himself towards the whole community of believers in Christ, in the first verse of the second chapter. He expressed himself with the same epithet afterwards, both when he is speaking of the different ages, and steps in the school of Christ, in the which some are infants, some babes, some young men, and some are fathers in Christ. And he afterwards makes use of the same term, as he applies himself to the whole body of those who were in Christ, according to his own views of the subject. After which he takes it up in the 3rd chapter, and uses it in his exhortation to the whole household of faith, saying, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." v. 18. And here in my text he again useth it, to the preachers of Christ, in the day in the which he lived. If we read the whole of the text, I conclude this will most clearly appear. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*. Now it is the ministers of Christ, must be the persons who are more immediately addressed, if we consider the connection of the words. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them*, most certainly unites itself with the former verse: if so, then the words must of a surety, belong in the first place unto them; whilst they may also include the whole church: it being true of them all; yet this must be in a diversified manner. The Pastors of the churches, by their standing fast in the truths of Christ, and of those in a very particular manner, to which the antichrists were perversely opposite. And the churches of Christ overcame the antichristian doctrine, by their abiding fast in the confession and profession of the true doctrine of Christ, as preached and maintained by their ministers. To both ministers, and churches, the apostle may be considered as addressing himself in this most affectionate and loving manner. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them*. It may be asked how was this done? I reply, by setting forth the Truth as it was most immediately opposite to the errors advanced: there could be no other way. Truth is mighty, and it must prevail. When ministers would aim to preserve Truth, they cannot be too simple and affectionate in their carriage and conduct towards the people to whom they belong. Nothing hath a better effect on the mind, than giving good ground and reason, for the saints themselves, to conceive their ministers, fathers, and instructors in Christ Jesus, have them in their hearts, and have them in very high estimation in Christ Jesus: it is then such words as these, *Ye are of God, little children*, sink down into their minds, and are very salutary and operative. And being informed that they are good soldiers of Jesus Christ—That they have fought the Lord's battles manfully—That they have overcome the wicked one—That they have been successful, and been strong in the grace of Christ, over false preachers, and false doctrines, the testimony of an apostle to the substance of all this, as it could not but be encouraging in that day, so it must be also in our day. It must therefore be, to this end and for this purpose, the apostle says in the words of my text, to the churches and ministers of Christ in his day, and when he wrote this Epistle, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them*. The address, with all the love and affection contained therein, most certainly must

have answered the end and design of this servant of Christ in them. And doubtless, there will be a virtue and efficacy found in them, which will be of use to the church of Christ, down to the very end of time. It may, and ought to be improved upon, that the ministers of Christ, can never express themselves too affectionately unto the people of God—To saints—To such as are the church and house of the living God. This should be very particularly regarded, when they want to prevent them from falling into error: and also when they see very evidently, they are by the good pleasure of the Lord, saved from error. There could not be a more soul-damning error, than what was contained in the false doctrines of the apostle's day: let it be confined either to the denial of Christ's humanity, or his Person, as being the Son of the living God, and as such he is God equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost: or—the denial of his incarnation, which was connected with it, that he was not the true Messiah. I say there could be no errors, or heresies, beyond these. I do not doubt but the whole essence of these still remains in the world: we know *Arianism*, and *Socinianism*, and *Deism* do. May the Lord preserve his ministers, churches, and saints, from each of these, and all contained in these. As to an open denial that Christ is come in the flesh, I know not of any such in our times, except we charge it on the body of the *Jews*, and *Deists*. We are sure the beloved of God, who are the called of God, will be preserved from these. And let such doctrines be ever so rampant, and overflow our borders, yet the true ministers of Christ will be able to address true saints, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them*. And I might say, the true churches of Christ will have the same good cause and reason to say to their faithful ministers, ye are of God, little children, and have overcome the enemies of our most holy faith, by your stedfast abiding in the Truths and ordinances of the everlasting gospel: by which it hath been fully proved, he that is in you, is greater than he that is in the world. Ye are born of God, and taught of God. You have in the strength of the Lord the Spirit, and under his anointings, withstood and overcome the errors of those teachers who are gone out into the world, crying out, *Lo here is Christ*, and *Lo he is there*. You have been made strong for this good work, because Christ is in you. He is strong to preserve you: yea, stronger is he in you, than the devil who is against you. The devil, he is the spirit of error: all errors spring from him. He is the author of them: it is he who rules in worldly men, and such seducers, as ye are called to encounter and withstand. This brings me

2. To consider, in what way, and by what means, these antichrists in *John's* time, of whom he is here speaking, were overcome. He says, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them*. This must have been by their continuation in the truths of the everlasting gospel, and in the ordinances thereof: by the which an outward and full proof was given, that Christ was come in the flesh.

Truth and error cannot stand together: if the one stands, the other must absolutely fall. Truth is mighty and must prevail; especially this Truth, that *God was manifested in the flesh*: because if it was not so, the whole Truth of God must have fallen with it. The precise time for the incarnation of the Son of God, was now past. *Daniel's* Seventy weeks were expired. The prophecies concerning the miracles which were to be wrought by Messiah, were all accomplished in Him. His life,

sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, were all most exact according to what the prophets had expressly stated in their writings. The descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*, the conversion of multitudes, the progress of the gospel, the miracles wrought by the apostles on the bodies of men, in the Name and faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully proved Him to be the Holy One of God—The Son of God, who was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. All this was as clearly manifested to the apostles, and such as believed through their word, in our Lord Jesus Christ, as light is to the eye: so that the very opposition to this, served to strengthen and confirm them in the belief of the same. Now the apostles and preachers overcame those seducers and antichrists, who would insist on it that Christ was not come, by their perseverance in the faith: and by this mean, and in this way, they were conquerors over them. *Ye ore of God, little children, and have overcome them.* He speaks it to their honour and praise. Whilst the whole must be ascribed to the Lord, which he also doth. It is in the same way, and by the same means, the church of Christ at this present time, and in every succeeding age, can alone be successful. It must not be by needless disputations. It is better in many instances to live the Truth than dispute for it. *Mr. Romaine* used to say, “I have got the Pearl, let others dispute about the field if they will.” I should for my own part be for living Christ, and in living him, be living over every gospel truth in which his true glory is concerned, rather than dispute about this, that, and the other, which the enemies of him, and his gospel might have to say. There can be no one error in the everlasting gospel; yet there may be ten thousand errors and false notions and opinions in the minds of unregenerate persons, which may be altogether opposite unto it: and so far, as in their own nature, to be subversive of the whole foundation, and glory of the same. As ever since the Incarnation of Christ, and his publication of the gospel, by Himself, and by his apostles, there have been false apostles, and false teachers, and all sorts of errors in the world, so the Lord hath raised up in every age of the church, proper persons, whom he hath gifted, fitted, and qualified to defend each and every truth of the gospel, most exactly suited to overthrow the errors of the day in the which they lived. Such are of great use to the real churches of Christ: and controversies, and controversial writers and writings are not to be overlooked, neither ought they to be neglected: yet it does not follow from hence, all saints should be engaged in these: all have not a measure of the Spirit, to fit them for the same. With respect to us, let us be preachers or hearers, we cannot do better than to abide by the Truth, and those who preach it, and live the same, and express it by our lives and conversations. Should it be asked, what is Truth, and where are we to go for it? I would reply, the gospel contains Truth. It is the revelation of the whole truth of God. If we therefore are in search of Truth, let us apply thereunto, looking up to the Holy and Eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son, for his teaching, light and guidance into a right, true, spiritual acquaintance and knowledge of the essential Truths contained therein. In *John's*, they had the gospel, which contained the whole of Christ: so have we. They had the ordinances of Christ, baptism and the Lord's supper, and these were outward memorials of Christ, and evidences that he had been in the world. We have the same. And they answer the same end and design, in this outward testification that Christ is



come in the flesh, which they then did. They had the Lord's day, which was the first day of the week, and it was kept by them in honour of Christ's resurrection from the dead. We have the same. ~~And~~ it is by these the memory of Christ is perpetuated—The truth of his Person, incarnation, life and sacrifice maintained: ~~and~~ his Name, fame, work, and renown made known in this our world, and unto us. ~~It is~~ by our true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are kept from error. ~~It is~~ by our continual abiding in the truths of the gospel, we are rooted and grounded and settled in Christ, and so stablished in the doctrines of grace, as not to be liable to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. Hereby such preachers as are of God, are kept incorrupt in doctrine, life, and conversation: and those churches and saints also, are preserved from wavering, or deviating in the least, from their acknowledgements and confession of Christ, by their constant adherence to the one true and genuine gospel of God our Saviour. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them.* Let us do likewise: by considering the gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ—That every truth in it, is as immutable as Christ himself. He is to us what he is therein declared to be. We enjoy communion with Him, in his incarnation, life, righteousness, sufferings, and death, as we receive the account given of Him therein, into our minds: this is under the operation of the Holy Ghost. In observing his day, which is styled from him the Lord's day, we solemnly keep up the remembrance of his resurrection from the dead. In the celebration of his ordinances, by ~~the~~ which I mean, baptism and the Lord's supper, we record his incarnation, his baptism, his Divine Sonship, his life, his sufferings, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his oblation, with his perpetual Priesthood in heaven, and continue to express our belief of his second coming: so that herein, and hereby, we overcome all false teachers, errors, and heresies. ~~For~~ we cannot in spirit and truth abide by these, and continue in them, but we must be overcomers, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony, concerning the gospel, the Lord's day, and the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would here ~~again~~ repeat it—The church of Christ, immediately formed by the immediate command and direction of our Lord himself, and which was sanctified, and consecrated by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*, had all these ordinances, and continued in their observance of them. On the day of *Pentecost* three thousand persons were baptized, and on this they were added to the church. It is added, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts ii. 42. This leads me to correct an expression, which it may be, we all at times are apt to use: it is this, we are apt to say of baptism and the Lord's supper, of Church fellowship, and as it concerns the form, order, matter, and discipline of a gospel church: these things, say we, are but outward things. Yet it should be known that by these outward things, the knowledge of the truth of all those acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, written and testified of by the evangelists in their four gospels, is kept up in the world. To confirm this I would add, the conversion of multitudes in the apostles' days from Judaism, and also from heathenism to christianity, and their observing the first day of the week, out of honour to the remembrance of Christ's resurrection from the dead, with their keeping up in their use and observance of them, the institutions, baptism and the Lord's supper,

was a most full acknowledgement that Christ, the true Christ was come. So we at this very day, continuing the same, make the same confession and acknowledgement the very apostles, and first christians did in their day and generation. We should for the honour of Christ, pay the strictest attention to the history of the gospel, as well as to the mystery of it: every tittle of the same being of the greatest importance. We should do the same with regard to all recorded, as the fruit and effect of preaching the everlasting gospel, as recorded in *the Acts of the Apostles*—How the gospel was brought into *Greece*—How churches were planted at *Corinth*, at *Athens*, at *Berea*, at *Thessalonica*, at *Phillipi*: all which places are in our quarter of the world called *Europe*. And *Rome* itself was visited with the gospel: yea, and some of *Cæsar Nero's* household were brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation. It all serves to prove to a demonstration, that our Christ is come, that he is the true God and Eternal Life. We should therefore consider what hath been delivered, as, when attended unto, all-sufficient to prove and evidence, that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed that Messiah which should come into the world. As the gospel and its institutions were observed and closely attended unto, by the apostles and first churches of Christ, and by their close attention unto them, and their cleaving to Christ in the truths of his everlasting gospel, with purpose of heart, was the means whereby they overcame the many antichrists, and multitudes of proselytes they made, so it is by the same means, and in the same way, we only can overcome any sort, or kind of error and untruth, respecting our Lord Jesus Christ. We should never slight any ordinance our Lord hath commanded. We should pay the greatest attention and regard to his end and design in the same. It becomes us most highly to esteem those ministers, churches, and saints, who abide in the truth of Christ's gospel, and ordinances: who neither make any alteration in the same, nor depart therefrom. It may be necessary at particular seasons to commend them for the same, and make use of it, to shew we clearly perceive hereby, they are the Lord's. This appears to me to be the case here. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* It is a continuance in the Truth, and that to the very last moment of our lives, is the proof and evidence of our personal and eternal election. This is Christ's word to all his ministering servants, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. ii. 10. I come

3. To give the reason, how, and by whom it was, these of whom our apostle is speaking, and here in our text is speaking unto, *overcame*. It was owing to the Holy Spirit: who was in them. He was more mighty to maintain the Truth in their minds, and their minds in the Truth, than the spirit of error was to prevail against them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Here are two spirits opposed the one to the other. The Spirit of Truth, and the spirit of error: the one in the saints, the other in apostates from the Truth: the one in the true ministers of Christ, the other in the ministers of antichrist.

The saints of the Most High God, are distinguished from all others. They have the Spirit of the living God, who dwelleth in them. They thereby become an habitation of God through the Spirit. That the true ministers of God have the Spirit, who dwells in them, and inhabits their minds, is evident from the apostle's saying, *Ye are of God.* It being

declared by *Paul*, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Our apostle therefore pronouncing these whom he here addresseth, to be of God, and styling them *little children*, and saying of them, they had overcome the antichrists who arose in that age, is fully expressive of their being under the guidance, direction, and influence of the Holy Ghost: which he most effectually confirms in saying, *For greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* This is a matter of vast importance to the church; it was then, it is so now: ~~it is~~ hereby those in the apostle's time, overcame the spirit of error which was in such as were seducers from the faith, and aimed to turn many from it; ~~and it is~~ by the same indwelling of the Holy Ghost, ~~that~~ ever since, and even now in our present time, the true ministers of God, are not only enabled to withstand error, and erroneous ministers, but even so as to overcome these. Whilst it is the written word of God, ~~which is~~ the two-edged sword which they are to wield, by ~~the~~ which, and its rules, they are to prove themselves workmen which need not to be ashamed, as they rightly divide it, yet it is the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in them, can alone influence and direct them in the true management of them. ~~And so it is,~~ that sometimes under his immediate influence, though many a time they are wholly unacquainted with it, as it respects their inward thoughts and apprehension, yet are they led in their sermons to speak what they never before spoke of; it may be, of errors: or of some who are not sound in such and such articles of faith: or, it may be of some things which disquiet the conscience: or of some secret things which are distressing to some whom they know nothing of, which proves at some certain periods in their personal, and particular ministry, that the Spirit of God is in them. For none but He, who is both omniscient and omnipresent could have put them upon speaking out and declaring: nor could any but He have brought home to the mind, and caused it to produce such effects on such and such as he has done. He who was in the antichrists in *John's* day was the devil. He wrought with energy in them. He put forth his power, and did to his uttermost by them, with a design to deceive. His ministers were very proper tools for him to work with and by. He wrought inwardly and effectually within them, as also he did upon the minds of their hearers by them. They were subtle, sly, cunning and deceitful ones; for as such they were completely what the great and grand deceiver would have wished them to be. They were haters, despisers, and rejecters of Christ. I judge they were all of them, sinners, who had sinned the sin unto death; of which some account hath been given, in the Sermon on the 7th and 8th verses of the 3rd chapter of this Epistle. Of these in our text the apostle says, the spirit that is in the world was in them: and who is the spirit of the world but the devil! If he was in them, they must be the inveterate enemies of our Lord. This they could not more effectually manifest, than by withstanding the preaching of his gospel, in this one grand prime article of it, that He was already come; this these antichrists denied: and in their denial of it, the devil supported them with all his might. Yet these ministers of Christ, whom the apostle is speaking unto in the words of my text, overcame those: and the reason of this was, because the Holy Ghost was in them. He dwelt in them. He put forth his power in them: yea, with the word of Truth which they preached: so that He was strong in their ministry, to settle and confirm the churches also in this most important article of

faith. I have therefore included ministers and saints in this address of the apostle, and in the whole contained in it, as it respects the substance of the same. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The ministers of Christ, in their resisting errors and heresies, do it on the behalf of Christ, and the church. They are placed by Christ in them for the defence of the gospel : as also for the confirmation of the same : which as the true church of Christ are partakers of the benefit thereof, so they may be said to be one with them in the victory, as well as in the benefits. It is by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in the ministers of Christ, they are too strong for the devil, and are enabled to overcome him, in his wiles and assaults upon the outward visible church of Christ, which he continually opposes. His opposition in the present day, is not in a way of open outward persecution : it is by reading over his old lectures on every subject, which can possibly puzzle and perplex the mind, and lead it to conceive there is a wrong statement of Truth given by such and such, whom he knows are most sincerely attached to the Person and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the ordinances of his worship. He raises up some whose outward appearance shall be very affecting to the unrenewed mind. He will have these to have and hold forth the semblance of Truth : nay some of these shall seemingly, in appearance and practice stand up for the ordinances also : yet notwithstanding all this, they shall speak such pernicious words, as shall draw away disciples after them : and when their doctrines are examined into, the words in which they express them, are found to tend to nothing more or less, than an annihilation of the professed Truth. The true ministers of Christ overcome these, because the Holy Ghost dwelleth in them : and he is stronger in them, to keep them up, and defend them from giving place to false doctrine, than the devil is to support his anti-christian ministers. It was so in *John's* day, and is so to the present day, and it will be so to the very end of time. Our Lord having said to his apostles, and whole church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matt. xxviii. 20. May the Lord help us to make a right use of the subject. May we consider the gospel, and its ordinances, as outward evidences of Christ, and stated memorials of his having been in our world, and let us esteem them as such. And as the truth and substance expressed and set before us in these, have been revealed in us, and realized in our minds by the Holy Ghost, who hath himself taken of these sacred and eternal realities, and shewn the same unto us, let us be aiming to be giving convincing evidence of this, to all with whom we converse. Let this be particularly evidenced by our attachment to those ministers of Christ, who are most zealous in their attachment to the Truths of the everlasting Gospel, and all connected with the same. Let us pray for them, and shew all due respect unto them. My friends, I have done as well as I could, with my text : and whilst I do not conceive it to be a full elucidation of it, yet I cannot say any more concerning it. No sermon should be complete unless it be in the generals of it : because there should always room be left for the free exercise of your own spiritual minds. I will once more recite the text, and then conclude. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* May it be so with us. Amen.

## SERMON LVI.

*They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*—1 JOHN iv. 5.

THE apostle having forewarned the saints of those false teachers and antichrists, who were then in the world, expressed what their doctrines were. Some of them denied that Christ was come in the flesh: others denied the reality of his humanity: others his Essential Deity, divine Personality, his Sonship and co-equality with the Father, in the incomprehensible Essence. From these preachers, and their errors, and pernicious ways, the elect of God were preserved: which was a glorious evidence for them, and unto them, that they were born of God; and also that they were taught of God. Hence he says, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* You have withstood these persons, and their errors and heresies also. The Lord the Spirit who is with you, and in you, hath made you stronger to resist the devil in these his ministers—to resist them, and their corrupt doctrine; than the devil who is in them, hath had power to enforce them, with all his subtilty to resist the power and wisdom by ~~the~~ which ye have preached, and still continue to preach the Gospel of Christ. This is of itself a most powerful encouragement unto you: *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* He then in pursuance of his subject, says in the words of my present text, speaking of those apostates, whom he terms antichrists, *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* The words most certainly imply, that seducers from the faith and truths of the everlasting gospel, and all false teachers, are actuated and influenced by worldly motives and principles. In general they are found to be of a worldly, sensual, covetous spirit—That they preach such doctrines as may gratify the corrupt affections and desires of worldly men: and these most greedily hearken unto, and embrace the same. That there may be a fuller opening and explaining of the words now before us, I shall set the same before you in the following particulars.

1. Here is a positive declaration of the false teachers, of whom he had been speaking, and warning the saints to beware, in the former verses; whom he had most expressly described, and also entitled the spirit of antichrist, who had multitudes of followers. He saith of them, *They are of the world.*

2. He gives an account and reason how it was they had such a multitude of proselytes. This was, because *speak they of the world.*

3. On the same account it was, worldly and earthly minded men, both professors and profane were disposed to be hearers and followers of them. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* I am

1. To take notice of this positive assertion, and declaration of the apostle, concerning these false teachers of whom he had been speaking,

and warning the saints to be aware of. He had called them false prophets, antichrists. He had expressed what their doctrines were, as to the essence of the same. They denied that Christ was come in the flesh. The spirit of antichrist was in them. They were apostates from the truths of the everlasting gospel. They went out from the churches, for this very reason, because they were not of them. Yet they had been external members; but they now ceased so to be. The devil who is the spirit of all error, was in them: this the apostle well knew; therefore of one and all of them, he says, *They are of the world.*

He had just before spoken in the same positive manner, concerning the true church and preachers of Christ; *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world:* and here to shew them the positive distinction between them, and the others, he says *They are of the world:* which was equivalent with his saying, they are in their sins: they are under the power, influence, and dominion of their own corrupt wills and passions; therefore they are to be avoided, and no conversation is to be held with them. I would here observe, though we have in our age, many deceivers and apostates from the faith, and others who are full of terms and doctrines which are altogether opposite to the glory, honour, majesty, dignity, grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet such is the state of the mind, even of some who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ, they do not like to have these persons mentioned in the pulpit, nor their doctrines examined into, and exposed: why, how is this? It is generally said, such are better left alone; and their doctrines also. In some cases I think so too; in other cases I think not. My own idea concerning such a point is this: if by taking no notice of an error, and the person who aims to spread the same, you thereby give full evidence, that the true church of Christ is perfectly secured from falling by it, or in no danger of thinking of the propagator of the same, as having any external influence of drawing away disciples after him; in such a case, I must confess, I do conceive, a total overlooking the man and his error, be he who, or what it may, is the best method of mortification which can be pursued. There is no better way to maintain Truth in and amongst the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, than by preaching the same, as it is recorded, stated, and revealed in the scriptures of Truth. The true foundation, and explanation of the same, agreeable with the written word, is, and must be acknowledged the best way to overthrow all error, of every sort, let it consist in what it may; yet in some cases, it cannot be avoided, but false doctrines must be examined into: the persons who espouse and propagate them, must be named: they must be spoken of as dangerous persons to converse with: to hear and be in communion with. We have the examples of the apostles themselves, and their command, counsel, and direction how to act: yea, in the whole context preceding my text, we have all this elucidated. Our apostle is not afraid of mentioning the errors and heresies which abounded in his times, so that the persons who were the preachers of the same, and their hearers also could not fail to be known. I should conceive in my own mind, that the great antichrist in our day, and the spirit of antichrist which is in the world, and which is now at this present time in our nation, working with all its force and energy, is *Deism, Socinianism, and Materialism.* I conceive the abomination which so awfully abounds amongst us, hath

its origin from these: it being by each of these *isms* the glorious gospel of the blessed God is brought into contempt amongst us. It may be said of the *Deist*, of the *Socinian*, the *Materialist*, they are of the world. Our apostle is very positive in what he asserts of his false teachers. He spake thus from the Spirit of God. The language of the sacred writers, both in the Old and New Testament, is positive. They were under the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, and their word was with power. They hesitate not to say, such doctrines, and such persons were of the world, and from the devil: nor are they afraid, nor do they shun very positively to prove their assertion, and appeal for the truth of it, to the lives, doctrines, principles and practices of those very persons whom they oppose. Talk of dealing fairly with men, their opinions, and characters none ever did this more equitably than the prophets and apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Every one, let him be who, or what he may, hath his true and proper character in the word of God: and let his error be what it may, there it is fully stated. We want no better rule to judge of ourselves and others by, than the holy scriptures. To be of the world, in the apostle's view of it, was to be in the arms of the devil; this he positively declares in these words, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." chap. v. 19. So that he most fully expresseth himself on this subject, that as all unregenerate persons were out of Christ, so all out of Christ, let their profession of themselves, and concerning themselves, or principles, be as they might, were of the world, and consequently were in the arms of the devil. Well then, as we consider the immediate subject the apostle is in our text upon; surely his declaration that these false prophets, teachers, and antichrists he is here speaking of—that *they are of the world*, was true; and that they were what he declares them to be; nor could he say more of them; nor could he speak worse of them: it contained *multum in parvo*: *They are of the world*. Consequently they must be possessed of the world: their doctrine must be suited to the carnal world; for though all of these cannot do without making some acknowledgments of Christ, and some profession of him, yet this must be in a way which is only suited to such as are in the world, and never experienced a new and supernatural birth. With all unrenewed in the spirit of their minds, nothing but what is suited to old-adam's views and apprehensions can go down: what is suited only to new-adam views, will by no means be relished, or be received by them. Let the eternal mind and will of God, in his everlasting love to the persons of his people, his choice of them in Christ before the foundation of the world—What God was unto them, and did for them in Christ, before the world was:—and how he hath saved them in Christ with an everlasting salvation, irrespective of any thing they are in themselves be stated and declared—This, such as are only in old-adam know nothing of: neither do they like to hear of this; nor will they by any means admit of its being true. Why, say they, according to what you say, we, the whole human race, are ruined by the fall: you say, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: then why may we not be saved as well as you, who took on yourselves as the elect. Surely you take great state to yourselves, and must conceive yourselves far better and beyond us, that God should love you, and hate us: you may keep this, and all your other doctrines to yourselves: we will not believe that

God is a respecter of persons: No: in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him: if we therefore do our best, repent of our sins, live a new life, trust in Christ for salvation, and attend to his ordinances and worship, we shall be as well off as you are, with all your particular sentiments: we will therefore leave you to yourselves, and have nothing to do with you, nor your notions. This is the very essence of good old Adam; out of which a variety of distinctions arise: one will be good in his own way—he will be a strict moralist, and all without Christ—another will be a most devout religionist, and this also without Christ—others will be by choice of some particular denomination—some *Arians*—some will be *Socinians* by their own choice—some will be *Arminians*—some *Calvinists*—some will be *Church-men*—some will be *Dissenters*, in their various denominations—some will be *Quakers*; and all this in their own principles, and agreeable to their own inward and personal apprehensions of their own inherent natural thoughts and ideas of what they style Religion; and thus reject the glorious revelation of the grace of the eternal Trinity, in the Unity of the One incomprehensible Self-Existing Essence, which they have been pleased to make known, and have most gloriously manifested in the salvation, which is set before us in the everlasting gospel. Well, beloved, so it is, all who are not born of God, are unacquainted with the grace of the gospel. Some of these are acquainted with the general, and outward theory of the doctrines of it: some of them are bitter enemies to it: some are depravers of it: some of them openly and daringly oppose it: some of them will have nothing to do with it. The *Deist*, *Socinian*, and *Materialist*, are inveterate enemies of all the truths contained therein: and the openly profane reject it altogether. It is therefore now, as truly as it was in the apostle's time, and it may be said of all those which have been enumerated, *They are of the world*. And let none of us who profess the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, attempt to deny this: if we do, we absolutely give God the lie: because this sentence was not pronounced by the apostle, but by the Spirit of God. And it absolutely belongs to all sorts of heretics, be they distinguished as they have been since, or may now be, by various titles and names, seeing they all had their existence, and sprung out of the spawn, and were generated out of and from the very same false prophets, antichrists, errors and heresies, which were in the apostle's times. Let this be noticed: as also what our apostle elsewhere saith, “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” chap. ii. 21—23. All false teachers, preachers, doctrines, errors, and heresies, *are of the world*: then it is not to be wondered at, the world, that is the men of the world should attend unto, and be taken with these. And this leads me to my next head;

2. To observe that the apostle gives an account, and gives a reason, how it was, the false prophets, and ministers who were under the very influence of the spirit of antichrist, in his time, had such a multitude of hearers and proselytes; who followed them: this was because *spake they of the world*: that is, such things as were altogether suited to the



thoughts and views, to the schemes and apprehensions of men of corrupt minds. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

It seems to me, these words are uttered, not only as giving a reason why, and how it was, these enemies of God, and of his Christ should have such a multitude to hear them, and also so many who joined themselves unto them; but also to comfort the true church of God, that they might not be dejected because of this. It is sometimes to us in the present day, a matter of astonishment, of trial, grief and dejection to our spirits, how it is, that such and such as we know are, in their spirits, tempers, and doctrine, not like the gospel, yet it is reported that they greatly flourish in their congregations; multitudes are added unto them; who submit and acknowledge Christ in his institutions amongst them. Yea, it may be, some of these, we should by no means refuse, but most heartily embrace into our own fellowship and communion in the gospel. This is sometimes a trial to the spirits of such as are really the Lord's: it is so to churches and ministers: how are we to account for it? I think thus; all do not see alike into the evil of errors: hence some actually fall into errors before they are aware of them: and get under such as we, from the scriptures cannot but censure, and this sometimes because they are prejudiced in favour of such, and will not receive the judgment of judicious christians concerning them. And sometimes because it may be said, such and such things are not so erroneous as other matters are: therefore though they are errors, yet they are not so hurtful, as some others are: this is a very loose way of talking: it is at times very injurious to our own minds, and to others also: for truth is truth. Every thing which differs from it, must be essentially wrong. It must be so in the smallest as truly as in the greatest degree. The preaching of these, of whom our apostle is speaking, as they corrupted the doctrine of Christ, so they drew many to attend on them, and to receive into their minds their pernicious errors. They were looked upon as containing what had greater light and glory, than what was contained in the doctrine of the apostles. Some conceived there was a greater liberty and freedom in it, that it was all grace, and that they were set at liberty from all restraint whatsoever—That the doctrine of grace gave them free liberty to sin: and such as thus apprehended, turned the doctrine of God's free grace into wantonness, and lived in all sorts of sin: thus they lived licentious lives. By such, these false teachers and their doctrines were highly magnified: others who did not break out into such enormities, adored a false Christ as preached by these false teachers: as they dressed him up with all the arts of philosophy, so that by their colourings he seemed to exceed in the view of such as were hearers of these, the very Christ. And no doubt but the devil himself might so work on their minds, as to let in such views of this his false Christ, as to give them such inward ideas of this account given by the false prophets in that age, as filled the hearers and those who received their doctrine, with a ravishment of spirit, even to raptures and visions of they knew not what. It was not to be wondered at, so many were followers of these, and gave themselves up to them; so as that the number of their proselytes increased even to a multitude. All this was because they were of the world, and spake of the world. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world*—worldly-minded men. They were those whose hearts were set upon nothing beyond self-

gratification. Their minds were not supernaturally renewed; therefore their views of Christ which they had, were not beyond the conception of what carnal reason could take in and apprehend: so that it became very easy for them to impose on such as were in a carnal state. It is so to the present time; many there are who have been under the true preaching of the gospel: they have been externally influenced by the same: there are preachers start up, who having some general knowledge of the outline of it, will prattle forth the same, with many things of their own, which they take care to mix with it. Some of these are men of parts, of elocution, and can by rhetoric, and carnal argumentation amuse the minds of those that are disposed to hear them: these pretend to have some peculiar light which others have not; yet when their doctrines are brought to the right standard, the holy scriptures of truth, some of them are deficient—others are mixtures—some are false—others break in upon fundamental truth: yet as they take care to gild them over, with some gospel phrases, and some scriptures cunningly chosen out, and separated from the proper connection in which they stand—hereby they deceive their hearers; as also by their aims to suit what they deliver, to the corrupt minds of men, so as they shall not fail of liking what they hear. As there are a variety of such, and as they differ variously one from the other in what they profess, so they have a variety of doctrines. They do not profess to believe and hold one and the same system of Truth: they glory in it, that they do not: hence, take the whole bulk of them, and you have amongst them all sorts of errors. But in the general, those make most proselytes who mimic the gospel most; and preach Christ in such an ensnaring and flattering way, as suits old-adam's views. Here comes in the *Arminian*, and all those who are corrupters of the gospel; who deceive both themselves and others, in naming the Lord Jesus Christ in their details of Him: and yet with all this, they never preach Him. There are some one would by no means join with these, on whom this falls. Many in our day, who belong to the true churches of Christ, who conceive they have a preaching gift—they go forth and exercise it: they think they preach the gospel: they are received by many, and acknowledged to be preachers of Christ: they have a zeal, and are full of assiduity, and go up and down, engaged as they themselves think, and others also, in preaching Christ. Why, beloved, when what they say, and the whole they have delivered amounts to nothing more than this, that they have made mention of his most precious and blessed Name, but never opened one mystery, nor doctrine concerning Him; surely this should not be styled preaching of Christ, because it is not so. Yet even these will sometimes have more admirers, than such as are the true settled preachers of the everlasting gospel. The former which have been spoken of, very often carry all before them: they have their multitude of converts: they never want for numbers to hear them: their proselytes cannot be reckoned up: their fame increases: their doctrines are admired: all sorts of persons who but once hear them, cannot forbear speaking well of them, and their doctrines also: whilst at the same time, the true doctrine of Christ sinks in the general esteem of the public: the true preachers of Christ, with his true churches and ordinances, are undervalued. This sometimes is a matter of grief and sorrow unto them; and too often they overlook the reason of all this—How it comes to this: why it is thus; I therefore conceive the apostle's words may be of as

real use, and service to us, on these subjects, and for our relief, as they were to the primitive church, when they were first delivered; *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* Such preachers as are corrupt in their doctrines and minds, are of the world: it is in their hearts; let them profess as they may, there is nothing but a corrupt principle in them: self is their whole and only end. They therefore are suited unto worldly professors, and to their carnal views of what they style grace and salvation; therefore let the subject they deliver, be in words what it may, yet they themselves take care to deliver it, as it may be palatable to a worldly, and even, at certain times, to a sensual mind. Thus *speak they of the world*, and garnish their doctrines, so as it may be easily swallowed by worldly men, and worldly-minded professors in an especial manner. *Dr. Gill* seems to think, *Dr. Owen* seemed to glance on such days and times as we live in, when he interpreted the following passage of scripture—"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir;" Isa. xiii. 12, as being expressive of a gospel minister, and his value in the church, on account of the scarcity of such: which *Dr. Gill* conceived was very awfully the case in his day, and would be more so, before the close of the present church state. He said in his day, there were scarce two men who preached alike: and most assuredly we who have outlived him, may say the same. I proceed

3. To observe, that on this account it was, viz., because those false prophets, seducers, the apostates, and antichrists in *John's* day, were of the world, and because they spake suited to the corrupt interest of flesh and blood, they had such a multitude of converts and hearers. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

This is the reason which the apostle gives of this matter: it is self-evident, and it contains the whole of it, and carries all before it. What can suit worldly and earthly-minded men, be they professors or profane, but to hear of the world, and that which they think to be their best interest and chiefest concern in it. Surely and positively this must be the ultimatum of every earthly-minded man: then that sort of doctrine, preaching, and profession, that leaves the mind quiet, without any mortification of his corrupt lusts and sensual affections—this cannot but be most truly acceptable to carnal minds: it was so when the apostle wrote this Epistle. Hence the world, those who were out of Christ, who had never been renewed in their minds by the Spirit of Christ, were carried off from hearing and attending on the true gospel, to hear, and become followers of those who started up, as having a revelation and doctrine to deliver, altogether opposite and contrary to that which had been already delivered by the apostles of Christ. And inasmuch as it promised them liberty, so that they might walk after the dictates of their own fleshly lusts and passions, they most greedily embraced it, without any examination into what those errors and doctrines were, which they had embraced, and which led them to entertain vile opinions of the true gospel, and the preachers thereof; and out of their own carnal affections, and that they might live in the enjoyment of the same, they most gladly embraced this lie, that Christ was not come: others, that Christ had an aërial body; not a true body—That He was not God; nor the Son of the living God. If you look into the 3rd chapter of the 2nd epistle by *Peter*,

and into the epistle of *Jude*, you will find all the heads of those false prophets spoken of by our *John*, were men of the basest minds, and practices, as it respects lusts and sensuality: and their followers are spoken of by *Peter* and *Jude*, as led and overcome into, and with the same horrible and soul-damning sins and corruptions. Now as the corrupting the doctrines of God's free grace, in the days of the apostles, led into such practices, and these ideas of sin being no evil, it having been atoned for by Christ, and that he having removed sin from his people by the sacrifice of himself, left creatures so without all sin, that let the sin committed be what it might, it was no sin in the committer, and therefore no matter how much sin was committed, it was the only way to glorify God, why it need not to be wondered at, such preachers, or doctrines as conveyed such ideas to the minds of the hearers, should suit worldly-minded men, and sensual professors: nor that the apostle should say, as he here doth, of such preachers, and their hearers, *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* None but the world could hear these. It suited none but such as had been professors, and had never experienced the grace of Christ in their souls, the presence of Christ to their minds, and the blessed sweetness and reality of communion with Him, in the blessings and benefits of his great salvation. Such latter cannot deny what he hath done for them; neither can they deny what he hath done in them; but such as are only mere professors of Him, may deny all this, and turn apostates from him: and such as these, are generally found to have been living in the practice of their beloved sin all their days, and this, whilst they were under a profession of Christ, and his gospel: and the lust of the flesh is too strong, almost for all, who are only professors of the gospel. Nothing short of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, can produce a new creation in the soul. None but he who is a new creature in Christ Jesus, will ever be able to withstand the assaults of earth and hell: such an one shall, because he is kept by the mighty power of God: this is his guard and garrison; so that he shall walk on, and persevere in the Lord's good way, and in the Lord's strength, even unto the end. He knows Christ bare his sins in his own body on the tree, that he being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes he is healed; yet he knows he is full of sin in his fallen nature; and that sin is equally as abominable in him, in the sight of God, as it ever was. He knows the death of Christ hath made no alteration in the nature of sin. He therefore flees from it, as from a serpent: he dreads it more than hell: he is taught by the Lord himself, and by his word, to abhor the very appearance of evil. He is therefore very cautious of every preacher, and he most carefully avoids hearing, or receiving any doctrine which makes light of sin, or weakens the interest of true holiness, being fully persuaded, though he cannot be saved by it, nor is it any part of his salvation, that without personal and practical holiness no man shall see the Lord. Thus I have endeavoured, the scale should be equally poised—That whilst errors in principle lead to errors in practice, corrupt doctrine can only injure the minds of such as are the hearers and receivers of the same; then what is there in the whole of this, to cast down and distress the truly godly? Nothing; the apostle's discrimination of true and false teachers, was intended by him for our spiritual advantage. Let us therefore make use of it for this very purpose: let us abide by the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, and to such

as preach it most purely : let us consider what every doctrine and truth will produce in the mind which properly and spiritually receives it : let us avoid being desirous of, and giving way to hear all sorts of preachers : let neither the great report which may be made concerning them, nor the multitudes which may follow them, be motives with any of us, to leave our own churches and ministers to which we belong. Why, beloved, if Christ and his salvation be preached unto us, we cannot have a better object and subject. It may be they may have more to say of Him, than we may be accustomed at all times to hear ; but they cannot preach a better Christ, nor a more complete salvation, than we are accustomed to have set before us, in the gospel of the blessed God ; nor can they express, declare, or mention greater effects produced by their ministration, than have been produced by the very gospel which we stand up for. It was preached by *Peter*, at the city of Jerusalem on one day, and three thousand believed and were baptized. It was on one day afterwards preached by *Peter* and *John*, and five thousand were brought to believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. It was preached by *Philip* at *Samaria*, and it caused great joy in that city. It was the means of the conversion of *Sergius Paulus*, who was pro-consul of *Cyprus*. Acts xiii. 12. *Erastus*, treasurer of *Corinth*, was also converted by it : so was a member of the Senate of *Areopagus* in *Athens*, whose name was *Dionysius*. And we are informed, our gospel entered into the house, and hearts of some of *Cæsar's* household. Seeing therefore, the very gospel which we have, and which is the gospel of our salvation, hath produced such glorious effects, and conversions, and these are recorded in the word of truth, we may well be satisfied to read and meditate on the same. As it respects what the true knowledge of Christ produces in the mind, and how Christ should be preached, both to sinners and saints, we have all this with us, and set before us, in the conversion, preaching, and writings of the apostle *Paul*. If the travels, journeys, persecutions, and imprisonments which may be recited by any, as the effect of their abiding by the gospel be related, they can never give us such an enumeration of the same, as *Paul* doth of his. If they speak of any wonderful appearances of the Lord for them, or deliverances which he hath wrought on their behalf, they cannot exceed what is recorded together with our gospel : which is complete, we have all things in it. Why, the false prophets and anti-christs, our apostle is speaking of, could neither mention, nor make their boast, that their preaching had turned the world upside down—That multitudes had been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan unto God. No ; poor wretches, they had defaced the gospel : they had turned many from it : they had done what they could to corrupt it, and to corrupt the minds of others by their horrible doctrines : they were of the world : they had worldly persons to speak unto : they spake what they knew would suit them : they were not suited to the called people of God, nor were the called people of God suited unto them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* Thus this subject ends : not that we have ended it ; for the last verse is to be the foundation and

subject of our next Sermon. What I have in this delivered, I leave to your consideration. If any thing contained in the same shews the face of the times, and may be of use unto you, may the Lord accompany the same with his blessing. If I have drawn the likeness of any, and shewn them their true faces, I can declare it hath been without any ill will to their persons. The Lord bless his Truth. Amen.

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## S E R M O N   L V I I .

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*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.—1 JOHN IV. 6.*

THE apostle to close his subject on the false preachers in his day, he having before distinguished betwixt them, and the true preachers of the Lord Jesus Christ, says what will all through time, be acknowledged by the real church of God to be an immutable truth; which is this—That the apostles of Christ, had their immediate call from Him—That they were of God—That they were immediately influenced, acted upon, and guided by the Holy Ghost. Such therefore as were born of the Spirit, and had a *sound* spiritual judgment, would attend unto these, and not be diverted from them, nor any of those who preached the true doctrine which they had received from them. And it was hereby manifested who those were that had the Spirit: and such who had not, dropping the true doctrine of the apostles, and going after, and hearing those very persons who opposed the same, it was hereby manifested even to a demonstration, that they were under the influence of the spirit of error. This is the summary of these words, which shall be branched out into their various particulars. *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* In speaking on the words before me, with a design to explain them, I will aim to set forth the subject contained in them in the following particulars.

1. This most solemn declaration, which the apostle expresseth for himself and others. *We are of God.*

2. What he professeth of others, by way of discrimination of one sort of hearers, from others. So that here the past subject must be resumed. *He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*

3. The inference drawn from hence, which is this—*Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

These, with the subjects which have already been gone through, are very peculiar ones. They are not taken up by me to point out how some of these may be suited to the times in the which we live; but

because they are, and come before me, in the course of the present Lecture. Therefore, whilst by no means would I baulk any thing, which is so and so, let it be pleasing or displeasing to those I minister unto, so I would have it understood, I for myself aim to speak in nothing but what the text calls for and requires, so as that the meaning of it might be declared. I consider myself as bound to do justice to my text, so far as lies in my power. I shall give myself no concern further than this: and if I may convey down to others, by my feeble writings, what I conceive of Truth, I shall be very well satisfied. They will be able to compare the same with the oracles of God: to consider it is to be compared with the same—That I now am, and must be considered by them, to be but dust and ashes—That what is of mine is set before them, so far, and no farther, than it is agreeable unto, and with the Spirit of Truth, in the scriptures of truth. In pursuing the subject now before me, with respect to the opening and explaining what is here contained in my present text, I am

1. To observe this most solemn declaration—*We are of God*: which the apostle expresseth for himself and others.

This is very evident from the word *We*; which being plural implies more than one: and who can we here include with the *We*, but the other apostles; who all alike bore testimony of our Lord's incarnation—Of his life—Of his acts—Of his miracles—Of his obedience—Of his sufferings—Of his death, burial, and resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and glorification—Of his sending down the Holy Ghost—Of his doctrine and ordinances; as he also did. Surely he himself could not but mean they should be included, and also understood to be included in the word *we*, and also in the whole declaration, *We are of God*. It may not be amiss here to recite the whole context, as this verse before us closes the whole of the subject, as it may reflect its light, and shed its influence the more upon our minds: with this design it shall be done; *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* The sum of these verses has been gone through in the former Sermons: the substance and general outline is this—That there were false prophets, teachers and antichrists gone out out into the world—The errors which they propagated are declared—The saints are warned against them, and their doctrines. It is declared by the apostle, that the true believers in Christ were of God: they had overcome the false teachers, and their heresies. The reason was, the Holy Ghost was in them: the spirit of the world was in the others. Hence he that was in the saints, being stronger than the devil who was in the erroneous preachers, they were too strong

for them. The apostle asserts they were of the world: they spake such things as were suited to natural religionists, to worldly-minded men; it was, therefore, on this very account and for this very reason, they drew such multitudes after them, and made so many proselytes. He then says of himself, including all the apostles, and first preachers of the gospel in that day, *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* I go over things again and again, to preserve if possible, the connection of the subject.

This most solemn declaration, *We are of God*, was most strictly true, as it respected the apostles. They were the first disciples of Christ, and were his followers and companions: they saw his miracles and could testify to the truth of them: they were called to be apostles, and sent forth by Christ himself to preach the gospel in the villages, towns, cities, and districts of *Judea*. After our Lord's resurrection, he conversed with them, more or less, for the forty days he remained with them, before his ascension into his kingdom of glory: and they were most truly fitted and qualified to preach the gospel unto all nations by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them on the day of *Pentecost*. *John* might therefore most truly say, of himself, and for the eleven, *We are of God*. They were so: they received what they preached from Christ: the truths they declared were immutable: the grace and salvation contained in them, was altogether divine. The glory and grace of all the Persons in the Godhead, so shone forth on the church of God, in Christ, in a manifestative way, that there was no life in the saints of the Most High, but as these truths were received into the mind, and operated in the heart. All the ordinances of Christ were settled by Him, and he gave a full account of them, and of the form, order, government, and discipline of his whole Church, and gave them the Holy Ghost, to lead, guide and direct them into a full, complete, and right knowledge of the same. The apostles were infallible men, as it respected their knowledge of all truth, doctrines, ordinances, and the whole which concerned the church of Christ: so that one of them might well say in his own name, and for all the rest, *We are of God*. What they preached of Christ, of his Person, love, salvation, blessings and benefits, was as true as God was true: there was no yea and nay in it: their sole end in it, was the glory of God, and the good of his Church. What they declared was what they had received from the Lord: what they commanded was in the Name of the Lord: and their success in their ministration of the word of life was wholly from the Lord. The conversions wrought in the souls of men, by their ministry, were wholly produced by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost. The building up the churches on Christ, was from the same Sacred Agent; so that in every sense, the inspired apostles might well say, *We are of God*. No doubt as our apostle uses these words, by making this solemn declaration he means the whole church of Christ in that age, should be led by it to consider, what had been from the beginning delivered unto them—That everything which was not agreeable to the same, was a defection from it—That it should be renounced: and as those false prophets, preachers, and antichrists had corrupted the true doctrine of Christ, so they were to be wholly discarded; as there could be no concord between Christ and Belial. Therefore it should be rightly understood, by all the saints, that the true gospel was the only standard of right and wrong—That all was



to be tried hereby: and no swerving from the same was to be admitted. *We know that we are of God.* We preach as He himself taught us: yea, we preach what He commanded us: what we preach will outlast the world: the gates of hell cannot prevail against it: this the apostle may be conceived as expressing, in this most solemn declaration. He had before said unto them, *Ye are of God, little children*: and now he says, *We are of God.* To shew that he, and they, were both right regarding what they professed, and which he had taught them, concerning the faith of the everlasting gospel. We might add to this, the apostle makes this solemn declaration, to confirm their faith in all which he, and which they might have received from the other apostles of the Lord and Saviour.

The revealed will of God, and the truths of the everlasting gospel set forth therein, contain the one faith of all the apostles, and saints of Christ, in all ages and throughout all generations. We are only safe, as we abide by the truths and ordinances of Christ, as recorded and set before us in his holy word: we have no defence from errors and heresies, but as we abide thereby. We have in the church of Christ, the true doctrine of the apostles: the same gospel which they preached: we have this in their writings: we have also the same ordinances. And if we add to this, the writings of the evangelists, we have the narrative and substance of all that Christ did, suffered, and wrought in the days of his flesh. So that there is a sense, in the which it may be said, the church of Christ is complete, inasmuch as it is in possession of all the sacred writings of those very persons, which from the beginning of Christ's preaching, were eye-witnesses and ministers of Him, the Essential and incomprehensible Word. We cannot want any thing beyond what is contained in the same; except it be the Holy Ghost, to lead us into the knowledge of the mysteries of grace, everlasting love, and salvation, revealed and contained in these. It may be the apostle meant also to include the true Church, in the day in which he lived, in this solemn declaration, *We are of God*: seeing it was preserved in the truth and faith of all contained in the revelation of grace: as they were kept in the true knowledge and faith, and ordinances of it, in an age when so many departed from the Truth, left the true churches, and gave themselves up to embrace and follow the tremendous errors and heresies of the then present day. As this was evidential of the true faith in the beloved of God, so it may be they come in for their share in this word *We*, as included with the apostles themselves, and are hereby honoured, as having by sovereign grace, kept, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, in the same faith which they had received from them; which could not but serve most mightily to comfort, encourage, and strengthen them. *We are of God.* We apostles, and you saints: we are partakers of one and the same like precious faith, which is founded on the revelation of grace; and which is exercised on the atonement, righteousness, and Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We the apostles, and you the beloved of God, are the objects and subjects of the everlasting love of the Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity: our place in the outward visible church differs from yours: we were eye-witnesses of those things which we have preached, and wrote: you are partakers of the same Christ, which we have written of and preached. You are in Him, as truly as we are: and as completely saved in Him, with an everlasting salvation. You and we, are therefore one in Christ: *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us;*

which seems to make it very clear; whilst it may be granted he in the first place, may design the other apostles with himself, saying, *We are of God*: he must mean others beside these: and who more likely than the whole primitive church, and the ministers thereof. I offer this as a reason for the same—All the churches had not the apostles with them: it is true they all had their doctrine: they had each of them their own ministers: they were particular churches: under this view, how easily these words are to be understood as concerning them all? *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us*. I will now proceed to my next particular.

2. What the apostle here professeth, by way of discrimination of one sort of hearers, from others: it is this—*he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us*. So that here, more or less of the past subject in our last sermon on these words, *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them*; must be resumed.

In these words, *he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us*, there is most certainly a vast and awful discrimination made between the hearers of the gospel: and such as so particularly describeth the true persons who hear the gospel to their advantage, that it cannot but be profitable to open, explain, and shew, who these are; as also who those are, who do not: each of these are thus expressed by knowing, and not knowing God. This is personally and individually set forth by the word *He*: the one knoweth God, the other doth not: this is manifested by who they hear, and what they hear. He only can be right that knoweth God: he must be wrong who knoweth not God. He that knoweth God, is a hearer of the Truth: he that knoweth not God, hath no delight in the Truth, therefore he is no hearer of the same: so says our apostle, and that in the words before us; *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*. May the Lord guide me to give a right explanation of the passage, so as to convey the clear light and truth of the same to your minds. The words going immediately before, were expressed by the apostle by way of discrimination concerning the false prophets, teachers and seducers in his day. He pronounced concerning them, that they were *of the world*, therefore, says he, *speak they of the world*. This is in direction to the whole of these, and as including in the same, their doctrines also. The apostle says, *We are of God*: so is that doctrine also which we preach. This is so evident, that the very consequences which follow our preaching the same, are a full proof thereof. *He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us*. The apostle lays his emphasis on this. *He that knoweth God*: such were not carried away with the false prophets, teachers, and antichrists of the then present times. I will therefore aim and endeavour briefly, to express, and shew forth what is to be understood as contained in this knowledge of God. Most assuredly, *he that knoweth God*, must be one who hath been brought to the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, which alone can make us wise unto salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus: this knowledge must be communicated unto us from the everlasting gospel; which contains in it, that revelation of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, in the which everlasting life and salvation are contained. As all of God is revealed in Christ, so this opens what the

apostle says, to the saints of Christ at *Corinth*, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. So that when we are brought by the Holy Ghost, to the right knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, as revealed and set forth in the scriptures of truth, and in, and by the doctrine of the everlasting gospel; we thereby, and therefrom, receive the true, scriptural and spiritual, supernatural knowledge of God and Christ into our minds: this—the true knowledge of God, and Christ, thus received by us from this medium, by the light and revelation of the Holy Ghost, is life eternal. Our renewed minds are the subjects of this knowledge: and such as are possessed of this, cannot but express the same: it is manifested in their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ: in loving God for his great love to them in his Son: and for this vast expression of the same—His so loving them as *to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. The true knowledge of this, operating on the mind of one thus enlightened, and taught by the Spirit of God, leads to a delight in hearing such doctrines of grace and salvation, by which he first received the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ into his mind. As he knoweth God in, and that by, these doctrines; so he is most suitably qualified and disposed to hear them preached: yea, he will, so far as it is in his power, hear the same; he cannot do otherwise. This is the substance of what the apostle here speaks: and this he spoke for his own times; but the same assertion remaineth down to the present; and it will extend down to all future times, in every one age, and period, of the duration of the church upon earth. *He that knoweth God heareth us*. So says the apostle in the words before us: it was in his times an immutable evidence, by the which the Lord's people were distinguished from all others: they knew their Shepherd's voice from all others: they knew his voice in the ministry of the word: they knew it when they heard it: they knew it, because they felt the influence of it on their minds. The saints in *John's* time, knew the pure apostolic doctrine: it was to them the bread of life: it was to their spiritual taste, sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb. It follows from hence, that such an one as knoweth God, heareth us, saith the apostle: and we must infer herefrom, that such as knoweth God, will now as truly as then, have his ear opened to hear the same evangelical truths. As this made the grand essential distinction in the apostle's days, respecting the hearers of truth, and error, even so it doth now. *He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us*. The proof that such an one is not of God, consists and is evidenced in this: *he knoweth not God*. No; that he does not: he may have an external apprehension and a general theory of the Truth in his mind: he may see some glory in the Truth, as it respects the system, harmony, and connection thereof: yet he not knowing God, and Christ in and by the same, he cannot have any spiritual communion with God in the Truth: he cannot therefore be supernaturally attached in heart and affection to the same: Therefore what materially differs therefrom, is as acceptable, yea, it is more so, to the mind that knoweth not God. Hence it is, he that knoweth not God, as he is not of God, so neither doth he hear us. He does not, nor would he, could he have his wish, abide by the pure

doctrines of revelation. No; not so: he must think for himself: he must hear such preaching, as hath no very particular views and doctrines in it: they must be such, as give free scope and latitude to his own natural views of the subject. This is for the substance of it, the state of the mind of such a professor, and such hearers of the truths—of the real, and immutable truths of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as are not born again, and have no spiritual knowledge of Him. Now such, the apostle declares, *are not of God. He that is not of God heareth not us.* Thus the apostle distinguishes between such professors as know God, and such as know him not. He must be understood of such as were open professors, and hearers, who attended on the external means of outward worship. *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.* We the apostles of Christ, have the true system of Truth: our fellow-labourers in the ministry, preach the same doctrines and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ with ourselves: we and they, are taught and instructed by the Eternal Spirit. Our doctrines, and all our holy motions, desires, influences, aims, and ends, spring from Him, and are designed to promote the glory and praise of God, in all his Persons and Perfections, as they are revealed and shine forth in the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to gain Him a glorious Name, and glorious praise. He therefore who is enlightened by the Holy Ghost, into the faith, and who hath a sound judgment of spiritual things, he will hear us: he doth hear us: he cannot do otherwise. He that hath a sound judgment in all things, respecting spiritual, eternal, and revealed truths, and is enabled to, and doth distinguish between things that differ, will hear us, says our apostle: he who conceives all must be well which he in his natural mind approveth of, he does not hear us. Now this, says the apostle, is the touch-stone; by which we form our judgment of the hearers in our present day: and we speak this in an especial regard, to those false prophets, to those preachers who are not of God, to those many antichrists, which are now arisen in the world, in our day: even now that we are drawing toward the close of this present church-state; of which, we the apostles, are fully persuaded, *this is the last hour.* We give you this mark and rule to go by: *We are of God:* Our doctrine is from heaven: we received it from Christ himself: it is in every branch and part of it, heavenly, spiritual, and divine. He that is born of God, and knoweth God, finds and hath the inward experience and enjoyment of the truth of this: he hath a spiritual knowledge and enjoyment of the transcendent excellency of the truth of Christ's gospel: he hath a spiritual receiving faculty, by which he receives the same into his mind; whereby he feeds on it; and is thereby nourished up unto life eternal: he therefore heareth us; so says the apostle; and he also says, *he that is not of God heareth not us.* He finds nothing in our ministrations to suit him: that which hath but the semblance and shadow of the gospel, and which hath together with it, many very gross blunders, and some very great and tremendous errors, mixed up in and with it, suits him better. May it not be said, as it was in the apostle's day, and as he declares it then was, is the very case now; it is even so in ours? I think some of you will say, yes: it is so; yea, and for the present so it is like to remain. The Lord only knoweth how long! I come

3. To shew what inference the apostle draws from what he had de-

livered on this subject, which is this; *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

The apostle is here speaking of the true apostolical doctrine, which the Holy Ghost never varies from. No; not in the least iota of the same: it is always one and the same immutably, essentially, and invariably in and throughout all ages: it always agreeth in all its doctrines, in all its parts, in all its truths and ordinances: it never changes: it is what Christ is—*The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*: there can be no alteration in the gospel, until there is in Christ himself, and in the will of God; because it is Christ revealed: and in it, and by it, God hath “made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” Eph. i. 9. If it be asked, where are we to go for the gospel in its purity, and as answerable to these hints of the same, which you have given? I reply, in the Book of God: in the scriptures of the New Testament: in the sermons of Christ and his apostles: in their apostolical doctrines, and in the Epistles written by them. It is in these we are to look for the true gospel of God our Saviour: it is also from them we are to get and obtain a right knowledge of the same: so that, as I for my own part understand the apostle, with the order and connection of the words before us, he is to be understood; *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us*—Hereby, such as told the true doctrine which was delivered by us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, which hath been also delivered by the evangelists, bishops, elders, and ministers of Christ, in the truth and purity thereof, as we the apostles delivered it, we know such to be the true preachers of the same. *Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* It is by the everlasting gospel, the Holy Spirit has given us a never-failing rule to judge all doctrines, spirits, and inspiration by; and the same is an all-sufficient one, by and unto ~~the~~ which you, the saints and ministers, and churches of Christ, do well to take good heed. This is as I conceive the summary of the apostle’s words here before us: especially when he here says; *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* The Spirit of Truth remained in, and was with those who continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine, and in the observance of those ordinances which Christ had appointed and commanded. The spirit of error was in those persons who dropped both the doctrine and ordinances of Christ: it was so in *John’s* time; it must be so now. If it be asked, seeing we have no apostles now, neither will there any more be such in the church, how shall we know for ourselves, who those are who rightly preach Christ, and who those are which do not? To this I would reply, our rule must be the word: we are to form our judgment from thence: we should not in this enquiry have men’s persons in admiration because of advantage; nor should the meanness of men’s persons sway us here. It is a true investigation of their doctrines, and comparing the same, and trying them closely and thoroughly with the truths and doctrines delivered in the sermons and writings of the apostles, as recorded in the written word, which should be our concern: which being satisfied and rightly informed in; then, he, they, that preach most exactly like unto the same, we may be well assured are the persons it becomes us to hear. It is not to be expected any one will be found to preach like an apostle: it is preaching

for substance the doctrines of grace, as they are stated and expressed in their Epistles which we are to look for; nor are we to look out for, and expect all will be gifted, qualified, and so filled with the Holy Ghost, as to speak and express themselves with equal light and power, the one as the other, who are sent forth by the Holy Ghost to preach Christ and salvation to poor sinners, by Him alone. All the Lord's ministers have one and the same gospel to declare, though it may be, one may have a more full and enlarged knowledge and acquaintance with it than another: the subject does not differ; whilst one may open it more clearly and completely than another. Those who preach the true doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and most like them as to the subject and substance of the same, these must be men of Truth: they cannot but preach the Truth, therefore such as know the Truth cannot but hear them. Our Lord himself says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free:" and again, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John viii. 32, 47. Those who are in error, be it in doctrine or practice, such will never be hearers of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Those who preach contrary to any one of the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, must be in error: so must those be who practise any thing in the worship of the Lord which is not commanded by Him. So that the Spirit of Truth as it is manifested in the true preaching the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, with all enjoined in it, and appointed and commanded by it, such as are born of God, will hear, they do hear, and are abiding in the same: so such as preach a mixed gospel, and those who hear and like, and also abide by the same, prove they are not well pleased with the Truth, neither do they set up their whole rest, nor centre wholly in the Lord Jesus. Such as proceed to a greater degree than this, and can be pleased with the abilities of men, such as they naturally possess, or have by their natural industry in the improvement of their natural faculties acquired, and thereby preach themselves, and not the Lord Jesus Christ, nor themselves the servants of the churches for Jesus' sake, surely such must be under the influence of the spirit of error: to such, the words of the apostle seem to be very applicable; "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Thus then we have had by the apostle's inference an account of the Spirit of Truth, and the spirit of error: which he hath thus discriminated: *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* We may add, there are but two spirits in the world; and especially as it respects what we call the religious world. The one is the Spirit of Truth, the other the spirit of error. They are both most easy to be perceived, by the effects which are produced by the one, and the other. The Spirit of Christ leads to Christ: off self, sin, the world and the flesh, and guards us against the assaults of hell. The Holy Spirit shields and covers the head of the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in the day of battle. The spirit of error leads off from Christ, into self, sin, the spirit of the world: it diverts the mind from the substantial truths of the everlasting gospel, so that the same, and even Christ the sum and substance thereof, is to such but a fable: for unbelief, legality, carnality and infidelity, reject and set aside

Christ altogether; except it be in merely naming him. The Lord save us from the spirit of error. The Lord bless us with his Holy Spirit, to lead, teach, and guide us into the true knowledge of Christ, and to keep us ever in the same. Amen.

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## SERMON LVIII.

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*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*—I JOHN IV. 7.

THE apostle having finished his former subject, concerning false prophets, teachers, and antichrists, with what was connected with and concerned the same, enters here on one, which he had been before upon, only he had treated it somewhat in a different method, in his second and third chapters of this Epistle. He dropped it when he began the past discourse; which having gone over, he here resumes it. He here makes use of it as the preface to introduce what he had to deliver on the subject of God's love to us, in the Person of his beloved Son: and concerning the gift and manifestation of that love in the Person of Christ, in the work of Christ, who was sent to be the propitiation for our sins: of which the apostles were the witnesses. Hence he says, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." verse 14. This he most delightfully dwells upon, in an heart-warming, and experimental manner: and issues the whole of it in this being God's commandment, that we should love one another in Christ, and for his sake. *And this is his commandment, or, this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.* The apostle in this Epistle, gives us a full portrait of christianity: he shews us what it consists in. He here gives us an excitement to brotherly love; *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* It is a principle, which is inherent in the new-born mind; every one born of God is possessed of it; they, having been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, are guided, influenced, and governed by it: so that there is nothing can be more evident to our spiritual senses and perceptions, than this must be, to all the regenerated, and called people of God, that every one that loveth his brother in Christ, *is born of God.* The true knowledge of God, as wrought in the mind by the Holy Ghost, is the producing cause of this love. Not one possessed of that knowledge can be without this love, or ever lose it. As God is highly and infinitely loving and bountiful, and bounteous in his gifts, towards and upon believers, and his elect in Christ Jesus, so they under the true knowledge and manifestations of the same, cannot but love those who appear to be the beloved of God: especially

those of them, whom they have personal knowledge of and communion with.

In my speaking on these words now before me, I shall aim to express the substance of them in the following particulars.

1. I will take notice of the exhortation. *Beloved, let us love one another.*

2. The motive made use of by the apostle to excite to this. *For God is love. For love is of God. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.* All love is in God. He is the fountain of it: from Him it originates and springs.

3. As the love of God, so far as it is known in the minds of saints, produceth a similar effect, so this is the cause from whence love from one saint to another proceeds: ~~so that the apostle says, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.~~

May the Lord most graciously carry me through these particulars, to your real profit, and his praise. Amen. I am to enter on these thus.

I. By taking notice of the exhortation, which is contained in these words. *Beloved, let us love one another.*

We have had the word *Beloved*, several times before. The frequent, as well as the present repetition of it, must have been very sufficient to confirm the saints in their apprehension of the continuation of the apostle's affection towards them. And also that he was pleased, all ways and in and by all means, to give them the fullest evidence of the same, thereby giving them an example in himself, that his love was also continually exercised towards them: yea, and that it was very particularly and individually exercised towards one or other of them, in prayer, or by christian act, so as that he never ceased loving them. They were to him *Beloved*: it could not be otherwise—They being the beloved of God—The brethren of Christ—His redeemed and saved ones; who having one and the same eternal Head, and hope, might well under all these considerations, be well affectioned one to another—They being all one in Christ Jesus—They having all the same union to Him—They being equally and alike related unto Him, as members in Him—They having all the same personal interest in Him, and in his great and most complete salvation. *Beloved*, (saith the apostle to these) *let us love one another.* He puts himself with the *us* in the text, as being under the same obligation to attend unto, and exercise and practise the same grace of love, in all the fruits and evidences thereof, to the beloved of God, that they also were. This is worthy of our consideration: there is no one thing, the holy apostles call upon the saints for the practice of, in any exercise, duty, and performance, but they were under the same obligations from Christ, and their relation to the Spirit, with all, and equally with the rest of the saints, to attend unto. It was not the elevated state in the church to which the apostles were advanced by the Lord Jesus Christ, which took them off, or excused them from the exercise of any grace, or set them at liberty from attending to the fullest conformity to our Lord Jesus Christ, by attending unto and practising, any of his most holy commands and will, expressed in his sacred precepts, any more than it did the rest of God's called ones. No; this it did not: therefore, whilst our apostle is here exciting the saints to brotherly love, he includes himself, and applies himself to the same, and these words to



himself also, as well as unto them. *Beloved, let us love one another.* As we are alike beloved by God our heavenly Father in his Son, we have the same salvation in our most precious Lord Jesus Christ: we are admitted into the same real communion with Him, by the Holy Ghost: our interest and state in Him therefore being one and the same, let us be excited from hence, to increase and abound in the exercise of our spiritual affections one towards another, more and more. As our text comes in, after so much had been said of the false prophets, teachers, and antichrists which were then in the world, and pestered the church of Christ in that day; so the apostle having given the saints an account of the Spirit of Truth, and the spirit of error, and having discriminated who was under the one, and who was under the other, it seems as if these saints were here particularly addressed in this very respectful manner, because they had been preserved by the Holy Spirit, in the prime points, doctrines, and articles of the gospel, and as though he would hereby manifest afresh his high valuation of them for the same. The love of Christ to his saints is altogether wonderful. The love of saints to saints, is a spiritual and supernatural love: it is for the nature and kind of it, the same which will remain in their minds to all eternity: it will exist in their minds all through life: it will not expire with their bodies in the article of death: it will exist in their minds for ever in heaven; and will be perpetually exercised there, suited to each other, as agreeable to that state. As the memory which is a concomitant of the mind, will last for ever, and no defect can ever break in upon it, when we are admitted into the state of immortality, where our minds will be immortalized, so it cannot but be admitted (at least it is very probable) that such as we have personally and particularly loved in Christ, and expressed our love to in Him, and have had particular communion with, in spiritual worship and conversations about our beloved the Lord Jesus Christ, we may have also the most intimate communion with them in glory. The equality of the saints in the same glory, seems to make for this; when and whilst in our present state, saints are admitted to converse, and have interviews one with the other, there is a most holy freedom, and equality with each other; so it seems to me, to be an item of the same, only as it will be advanced to a greater, and far higher degree in the state of glory. And whilst it cannot but be, when we are admitted there, we shall both see, and also converse with saints we never knew before; yet to converse with those we have known in the body, and had special spiritual converse with, will doubtless be very delightful to our then disembodied minds: as truly so, as we find it now. Love in our minds, implanted in them by the Spirit of God, is a fruit of a new and supernatural birth into Christ, which will remain undiscovered, until it is brought forth into act and exercise by the almighty grace and power of the Holy Ghost. It is first exercised on God, and Christ, and then upon the children of God: and this will be discovered unto us, and be exercised towards them, according to the conceptions formed concerning their spirituality and heavenly mindedness. As we grow up into an acquaintance with the Lord's beloved ones, and are in a state of Church fellowship with them, we love them as members of the same particular body of Christ with us: and we then exercise and express ourselves towards them, and love for them, in a variety of ways, and by various acts and expressions. We love their persons in Christ,

and for his sake. We love them as his members, and because they belong unto Him : we love them as partakers of Christ, and with us in the same gospel fellowship and order : we love them individually, generally, and particularly : we love them as saints : we love all the saints, let their degree of knowledge and standing in Christ, be as it may : we love those of them more and most particularly, whom we are acquainted with ; whom we have had such particular conversation with as hath knit our hearts unto them ; to whom we have most freely imparted our views of Christ, with our spiritual knowledge, experience, communion, and enjoyments of the Father's love and Spirit's consolations : to those persons unto whom we have most freely opened our personal cases and griefs, which is in some instances, and hath been found to be, a very great means of uniting the hearts and cementing the affections of saints to each other. These things which have been mentioned, were undoubtedly the means in the apostle's time, as they also still are, of increasing the spirit of real love and affection one towards another ; for love must have an object and a subject, and a mode by which it is to be expressed and exercised. The apostle had both in his view ; therefore he says, *Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* The word *us* confines the subject treated of to the saints ; to those very persons of whom he had said, *Ye are of God, little children ;* and also to whom he said, *We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us :* to these he here says, *Beloved, let us love one another.* He does not here say in what way this is to be expressed : he leaves that wholly out ; yet he suggests, the first acts of love towards each other, be our thoughts of the same as they may, it must be to the persons of the saints : which when it is once fixed on them, by the supernatural direction of the Holy Ghost, from spiritual apprehensions that they are Christ's, and belong unto him, this draws forth love into act and exercise towards them ; and that into such beneficent acts, both towards their bodies and souls, as will fully prove, and most clearly evidence the inward reality of the love in their own hearts, one to another. There is therefore, as I think, a great emphasis to be laid on this—That it is the persons of the saints, are the first, and immediate cause of our love unto, and of our affection unto them, and for them : there should be great attention paid to this therefore, and for the following reason—That like as the persons of the elect, are the immediate objects of God's love ; and all they are in Christ, with their whole perfection and glorification in Him, is but the fruit and effect of the Father's everlasting love to their persons, in the Son of His love, these being the blessings concomitant therewith ; so it is, our loving the persons of the saints, as saints, is the foundation of all our expressions and acts of love towards them. We need not say the apostle's words contain this in the first place ; but we may positively affirm it ; and this will, and must be the case in heaven. We shall there love the persons of the saints, and this very particularly and distinctly ; as this will be a part of the communion we shall have with them, in the state of blessedness and immortality. It is so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He loves the whole body of saints in earth and heaven. He loves them personally, individually, and distinctly. So also does the Holy Ghost. His love to each and every one of them, as the members of Christ, is so personally and distinctly towards them, that He is pleased to dwell in

each of them, so ~~as~~ that their very bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. And saints have, and will continue to have, such personal and distinct fellowship with each of the Persons in the essential and incomprehensible Godhead, in the kingdom of glory, and such clear, intuitive apprehensions in their spiritual, intellectual faculties, of the Personal distinction of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as that they will have personal communion with each of them; not that the *modus* in the Divine Essence, which gives existence to the Divine, co-equal, co-essential Three, who are One and the same incomprehensible Jehovah, will ever be known, or comprehended, by elect angels, or saints, in glory, or throughout the ages of eternity: this is impossible. But the truth and glorious mystery thereof, will be so far let in upon the minds of saints and angels in glory, as that they will have the fullest evidence and satisfaction in their intellectual powers they possibly can: and that to such a perfect knowledge of the same, as shall lead them to enjoy the full blessedness of personal communion with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, to the fullest satisfaction, and the uttermost blessedness they are capable of in the ultimate state of perfection and glory; so ~~as~~ that they will be filled in their minds, with the knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as holding communion with them, and filling them with all the fulness of God. From all this and what hath been delivered, we cannot but see the great propriety of the apostle's exhortation to all the saints, and which it well becomes them to attend unto: *Beloved, let us love one another*, which so far as we do, will appear and be manifested in every relation we stand in to each other, as members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones; and also in every instance in our power. It is a love which is wholly supernatural: it springs out of the love of God in Christ unto us: it is not a common natural affection, which may arise in the human breast, which the apostle is here exhorting unto. No; it is a different love: it proceeds from another source. This brings me to the motive made use of by the apostle, and this makes it very evident, that it is a love, beyond what nature can, or ever will produce, as no effect can possibly be beyond the cause which produceth it. This then introduces us to our next particular.

2. *For love is of God. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.*

These are the words of the apostle: and this is the motive made use of by him, to excite the saints, as beloved ones, to love one another: we are now to take up this, and improve upon the same, by the good hand of our God upon us. *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: a most glorious motive! the apostle conceived it to be all-powerful and commanding: he therefore excites to the practice of that which he had been exhorting them unto. That you may see the full truth of this, you shall have the whole of the words recited; Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* Yet it is these words, *for love is of God*, which are to be spoken of now. It is this too, on which the apostle rests the whole weight of his present exhortation: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.* It is a true and proper grace, belonging to all such as know God; and are born of Him. *Love is of God: all love cometh from God.* He is the fountain of it: all the love that is in all the creatures, cometh from Him. He is the author and

fountain of it. All the love of angels to each other, is from the Lord alone. *Love is of God.* All the love of creatures one to another, in the creation state, was from God alone. All the love of saints to each other, as saints, either in earth or heaven is of God. So the love in the heart of Christ, to the whole election of grace, saints and angels—To his bride and spouse, to his beloved ones, to each of them personally and individually, to those of them on earth, and to those of them in heaven, must all be the fruit of God's love to Him. So that it is most expressly true that *love is of God.* It is owing to the love of God as an essential perfection in the infinite and incomprehensible Nature, which God was pleased to display on, and towards Christ God-Man, in whom his soul delighted, with whom he was everlastingly well pleased, in whom the whole fulness of his love hath shone forth, and unto whom the whole fulness of it hath been communicated, that it hath been visibly expressed towards the whole creation of God. In the bringing the same forth into existence, in and throughout the whole creation, it most fully appears that the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: this shews that love is of God; which hath been in a most wonderful and supernatural way, most gloriously discovered and manifested to the persons of the elect and beloved of God, in the Person of Christ. It is God's being love, and bestowing the fruits and effects of the same upon his people, in Christ, which the apostle hath his eye upon, and refers unto in this scripture before us. All the love of Christ to us, all the bowels of his mercy and compassion unto us—it is all as He is considered by the Divine Father, as our Head and Saviour, our Mediator, and standing in this relation unto us. So that it originates wholly from the love of the Divine Father, both to Him, and us: it is here made use of, as a motive and excitement for saints to love one another, and to draw it out into act and exercise. This is most noble and divine: it shews from whence our love to Christ, and saints originates: it is from God himself: it can come from none but him. He is the first cause of it: and the continuation of it, to us in Christ Jesus, may well be a motive to us, for the continual exercise and expressions of the same, in our hearts and affections towards each other: it may well serve as a cement to knit our hearts together, to each other, and to Christ also; from whom the knowledge and enjoyment of the same flows into our minds. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.* You cannot be more like unto God, than by loving one another: it cannot be otherwise, seeing *love is of God.* All the love we have one for another for the Lord Christ's sake, and which we express and exercise one towards another, in our real spiritual friendship, cometh alone from Him. Surely this is what our apostle here says, and it is from hence he draws all his motives to influence our whole minds to the practice hereof. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.* It is from Him: He is in all his acts towards us, and dealings with us as the members of Christ, continually demonstrating to us the truth of this. Let us therefore give Him the glory of the same, by expressing our true apprehensions thereof, by our loving one another, with the warmest affection, and most ardent fervour we possibly may or can: this will be an internal and an external evidence, that we are herein right with God: it is a very full evidence as it is outwardly seen and manifested openly, in the eye and view of others, that we are born of God, and that we know the Lord. For this cannot

be set aside, but must be universally acknowledged by the whole church of the living God, that *every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. This brings me to my next particular which is this;

3. To observe that, the love of God, so far as it is known by the saints, produceth a similar effect; that is, as *love is of God*, so the knowledge of the same, produceth in the minds of saints its similar, and true effect: this then is the cause from whence love from one saint to another proceeds, so that the apostle says, *and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*.

~~It is~~ the discoveries and manifestations of the love of God to us, warm our hearts, inflame our minds, influence our wills, direct our judgments, ~~and~~ from the same it is, we love the Lord's people—The sons and daughters of the Most High God—The brethren and sisters of Christ, and such as we look upon as our brethren and sisters in Him. This is the true, proper, and genuine effect and fruit, which ~~is~~ produced in the minds of saints one towards another according to Christ Jesus, by rightly conceiving and apprehending that *love is of God*. It is a never failing motive to excite us to the perpetual practice and exercise thereof. And we perceive in ourselves and others, how far a sense of this truth, that *love is of God*, is influential by the effects it produceth in us, in animating us to love one another. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. The apostle makes this *loving one another*, the evidence of our being born of God, and knowing God: we cannot know God before we are born of God: the new-birth must precede it: and this is one undeniable evidence of it. This is the first and greatest act in the soul, and the foundation of all spiritual acts which follow: it is entirely produced by the Holy Ghost within us. The soul or mind is the subject of the same; where it is produced it abideth for ever: it undergoes no change; yet the person who is the subject thereof does; but the regenerate mind is the same at all times; yet the exercises of the same are not; no, not in any one particular. Every grace contained in the new-birth, is only drawn forth into act and exercise, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to operate on the same; yet all the graces of the Spirit are at once implanted in the soul, and will continue and remain therein to all eternity. Now one of those graces is to love one another: the motive from whence it proceeds, and by which it is drawn forth into act and exercise towards each other, is most heavenly and divine: this is it; *for love is of God*. It being so, it therefore follows, *and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. All who love the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, which is inscribed on the mind, and stamped on the heart, by the Holy Ghost in regeneration—such are of God: their love for saints is from God: they love where, and whom God himself loveth: they see his image in righteousness and true holiness, expressed in the lives, tempers, conversations, walk and conduct of such and such, and they cannot but love them for the same. All this *love is of God*. *For love is of God: and every one that thus loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God*. It is congenial with the new-birth, and natural to all the new-born, to love for the Lord's sake—To love out of the same love, wherewith they love God, and Christ, to love one another. This is not to be withstood: a man cannot be born again, but this must be the case: it is the new-birth itself: that is, it is such an inherent faculty in the regenerated mind,

that it is of the very same existence with it : not that it can be in act and exercise, but as the Holy Ghost is pleased to put forth his own divine energy so as to draw it forth, and discover the same in its fruits and effects. Hence it is, in this verse before us, the motive to excite to the exercise of this love is mentioned, as it is in the hand of the blessed Spirit the means of drawing out this grace into act and exercise in loving the brethren. We are too apt when we hear, or speak of loving one the other, to conceive we can do so without the Holy Ghost : at least we do not conceive we are so entirely dependant on that Sacred Agent, for the exercise of brotherly love one towards another, as we are for the exercise of our faith on the Lord Jesus. Yet so it is that we are ; and the motives made use of by the holy apostles, when they treat on these subjects are full proof hereof. Such an one is born of God : how is this proved ? He knoweth God : what does he know of God ? He knows that *love is of God*—That all the love which is in the heart of saints as saints, one towards another is of Him, and from Him—That it is hereby evidenced they who thus love one another, and whose motive for so doing is because love is of God, or in other words, because they are brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and therefore as partakers of the same, and as one and alike entitled to, interested and instated in all the blessings and benefits thereof, they love one another, from that very spiritual principle wrought in their souls, by the Spirit of the Living God. In so doing they give full proof and evidence of their knowledge of God : as they are born of Him, so they have the mind of Christ made known in them, and unto them : they have it both outwardly, and inwardly : they have it in the holy word, which contains the revealed will of God : they have it in their new regenerated minds, on which the Holy Ghost hath been graciously pleased to reinstancp the same. Thus *every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God* : and hereby he giveth true evidence of the same. The true knowledge of God, is effectual and influential on the mind : it was so in the apostle's day : it is so still, and ever will be : for grace is one and the same, in every age, and throughout all generations. Nor can it more evidently appear that you know God, and are born of Him, than by your abounding in the grace and exercise of love. *Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* The apostle lays great stress on knowing the Spirit of Christ ; on being of God ; on love, that *it is of God* ; on being *born of God* ; on *every one that loveth*, that this is fully evidential that *such are born of God* ; and of such, as having the true knowledge of God, therefore the subject before us must be of vast importance. For without this we cannot live to God, nor shew forth his Praise and Glory. As in the whole of this epistle, both in what we have already passed through, and in some particulars we have yet to go over, the apostle distinguisheth between one professor and another, so he all along treats the same, ~~so~~ to shew, how that real communion with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, produceth its genuine fruits and effects. ~~And these can~~ ~~be~~ ~~but~~ where there is a communion and fellowship kept up, and maintained with the Father in his love, and with the Son in his salvation, through the grace and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There can be no new-birth where the Spirit is not : neither can there be any true knowledge of God and Christ, where there is no new-birth in the soul : nor can there be this, where there is no union of the person to Christ. These truths, graces, effects

and fruits are so linked together, as that where the one is found, and can be proved there is also the other. Such as love one another are the beloved of God: it cannot be otherwise *for love is of God*. He is this in Himself; and in all his manifestations, and communications of Himself to his beloved in Christ, He fully proves the truth of all this; therefore every one that loveth God, Christ, the Spirit of God, the people of God, the word, ordinances, and Truths of God, and those who are united in bonds of holy fellowship with each other, in the good ways of God, all such fully evidence hereby that they are born of God: their new-birth declares them to be his children, as He has thereby fully declared himself to be their Father. By means of their new-birth, they know Him to be their Father in Christ Jesus, and confess Him; and cleave to Him as such: this is a personal, and it is also an universal case: it is thus expressed in the words before us. *Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. The cause cannot be without its effect; neither can the effect be without its cause: this is the foundation of all expressed in this Epistle, concerning what is by some styled, the marks and evidences of inherent grace. I would hope I have gone through the whole so clearly, as not by any means to lead the mind of the child of God to look within himself. It is wholly in looking to Christ, and having communion with the Father in Him, that these graces are produced; and we are the subjects in whom the same shine forth, and are displayed. May the Lord the Holy Spirit give us his own light upon this, and every portion of sacred writ which at any time may be before us. May he carry us through what remains of this Epistle, with the utmost clearness and perspicuity, that we may have a right understanding in all things. The Lord the Spirit grant us his blessing, for the glory and praise of his great and most Holy Name, to whom with the Father and the Son, be glory and honor everlasting. Amen.

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## S E R M O N L I X.

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*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*—1 JOHN IV. 8.

God manifests nothing but love to such as he loves. It is the first and principal act of God towards his beloved. He displays all his glorious Perfections, in manifesting the greatness, majesty, strength, and continuation of his love to his beloved: all which He does in the Son of his love, whom he hath constituted and appointed from everlasting to be God-Man in the Person of one Christ. God in his Essence, in the Divine Nature, or Godhead, in ~~the~~ which the incomprehensible and Essential Three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, exist and co-exist by Essential union, is love. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, the Holy Ghost loves the Father, and the Son. The whole of this is reciprocal, Personal, and Essential: so that it is an incom-

prehensible and essential Truth, that *God is love*; and from hence he draws this inference, *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*. These words seem to be a filling up his former sentence: he had said in the former verse, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. In this he says, *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*; so that this makes the former scripture complete: the former is an affirmation, the latter is an assertion. If so be this is a truth, which he expresseth in these words, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; which is an affirmation; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*; then it follows as clear as light doth from the sun, that *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*. In my attempt to open these words, considering them as connected with the former, I will aim to cast them into the following division; by considering them thus.

1. The declaration of the apostle in these words, with what is included and expressed in them: *He that loveth not knoweth not God*.

2. This most solemn assertion respecting God himself; *God is love*. *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*.

It is impossible to explain these words to any good purpose, but by having to do with the connection: leave out the one, and you so disunite, as to lose the beauty of the same. I have endeavoured so far as I was capable of it, to attend hereto in what we have gone through and passed over. I know this in an Exposition is a very material point; but I am not so self-conceited as to conceive I have been complete in this; yet I would wish the reader of this Epistle, and he also, whoever he may be, who shall read this *Exposition*, and at any time preach or expound on any part of this Epistle, to pay very particular attention to this: it will be a means of shewing himself to be a workman which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Nor will he the less shew himself to be so, if he take all due care to keep every subject throughout it quite distinct; for by keeping the same in its proper place, he will be the more completely capable of managing the same. It may be said, this is more than you have properly done: it may be so; I do not look on myself, neither do I profess to be a man of abilities; yet it is very natural to give advice, even where one cannot fully attend correctly to it one's self. But to leave this, I am to enter on the first head of my present discourse, viz., To shew and open

1. This declaration of the apostle contained in these words; and also what is included, and contained in the same, *He that loveth not knoweth not God*.

It is a filling up, as hath been already observed, the former words, which were, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*. *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*. We have gone over the former verse, our business is therefore with the present: in ~~the~~ which it is positively asserted in connection with the former words, *He that loveth not knoweth not God*: the reason for which is given, *for God is love*. The whole must be considered as arising out of this expression, *for love is of God*. He is the fountain of it, and that in all the creatures both in heaven and earth—In Christ—In the elect angels—In all the saints: so as all that know Him, cannot but acknowledge this. Then such as love



not saints as saints, though they be numbered with them, and may have and enjoy the outward blessings of being reckoned amongst them, yet they cannot be saints, notwithstanding this, because *He that loveth not knoweth not God*. He cannot have any spiritual perceptions, much less can he have any true knowledge and experience; he cannot have any spiritual communion, nor enjoyment of the love of God in any communion with him. Now as it had been affirmed in the former words, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God*; so it is here, *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*. Now this cannot but be included in it—Such must be wholly, let their profession be as it might, unregenerate persons; for if such as *love* the brethren, were born of God, and it is affirmed of them that such knew God, then this must most evidently follow, that such as did not love them, could neither be born again, neither could they know the Lord. So that put these two verses together, and the one declares who knows, and the other who knows not the Lord. Thus the apostle herein distinguishes the one from the other: he expresses the same in them. You may most clearly perceive this, and see it with your own eyes, by reciting the same, and by your own views thereof: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*.

It is possible to be under a profession of the gospel, and not to know God: and the true knowledge of God, consists in knowing him as he is revealed unto us in the scriptures of truth. It may be apprehended that God is infinite, incomprehensible, that He is Self-existent, All-sufficient, that He is Holiness and Perfection itself, that He is a sin-avenging God; yet whilst all this is most justly true, and it is thus predicated of Him in the inspired volume, yet there is nothing in all this which can possibly endear him to us. The apprehension of all this, may create solemn and awful apprehensions of Deity in our minds, but none of all these can encourage us to draw nigh unto him; neither can we conceive from any of these, any encouragement to hope in Him. So far from this, that the more we are led to contemplate God in his absolute Godhead and perfections, the more we dread the thoughts of any actual approach to Him. It is an apprehension agreeable with this which *Dr. Goodwin* hath, and which he expresseth thus: Thou mayest think too much of the Holiness of God, of the Wrath of God, of the Justice of God, of the Majesty of God; but thou canst never think too much of the Love of God: and if thou thinkest so much of it, as to be overwhelmed and swallowed up, and lost in it, so much the better. It is this view and knowledge of God, which alone can produce those apprehensions of God in our minds, as can give us ground of hope and confidence in the Lord, such as maketh not ashamed. We cannot love God, nor the saints and beloved of God, until we know that *God is love*. And we are brought to this, as the Holy Spirit is most graciously pleased to enlighten our minds into the revelation the Lord God hath been pleased to make of His Nature, Persons, and Perfections in the everlasting gospel of his grace. He proclaims himself therein to be, *The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious*: this comprehends all we need to know of him, either in life or death. The true knowledge of this, received into our renewed minds, from the word and by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the true and gospel knowledge of God in us: from

hence we clearly perceive that *God is love*. And in the true apprehensions of his love to us, and mercy in Christ Jesus, which he hath already been pleased to make known, and to manifest unto us, and within us, we see that *love is of God; and that every one that loveth God, and the children of God, is born of God, and knoweth God*: as also that *He* be he who he may, *that loveth not knoweth not God*. The reason for which is self-evident, *for God is love*. The knowledge of God, and his love must go first: then love to the saints follows: and the one will be always in proportion to the other. If we would love saints aright, we must look off from all, and what they are, or may be found to be in themselves: we must not meddle therewith: we must look on them as the objects and subjects of the love of God; and as viewed and beheld by Him in the Person of Christ as God-Man, their Head, their Representative, their Mediator, their Saviour, their Lord, their Righteousness, their Purifier, their Perfection, their Strength, and their Glory. ~~It is~~ by thus viewing them, and our persons in Christ, ~~that~~ we get above and beyond ours, and also all their personal and particular weaknesses and sinful infirmities, and love them in reality, and true spiritual affection. We should never forget it is in this way, our Lord himself expresseth his love to us and them. He knows full well that we have our natural infirmities, our sinful infirmities, and our personal and constitutional weaknesses; yet he looks upon us, and presents *us to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. And we should look on ourselves as Christ looks upon us, and upon the whole mystic body of Christ so likewise: this would cement our hearts and affections to each other, so ~~as~~ that in our measure we should love one another, as Christ hath loved us: but herein we all fail. It is the case with us all—we undervalue one the other: we sometimes make too free with each other: we love to find out each other's infirmities, and too often keep the same in our memories, so as to nourish thoughts in our minds to the real disparagement of such and such. I should not doubt of this being a truth, were I to lay this to the charge of almost all the people of God in the present day: I include myself in the charge. It most certainly is the case—it is not good for the people of God to know too much of each other, as it respects their infirmities; nor does it answer any end for ministers of Christ to touch on these in their ministrations, unless the Spirit of the Lord leads them so to do; which when he does, it should be considered; and then it will be sure to answer its own proper end: and this may be known in the following way—When the minister without any knowledge of the person, and without any design to him, is led to speak on such a very particular subject and case, as comes to the conscience of individuals, and they are thereby convinced, admonished, reprov'd, and warn'd against such an evil, be it in temper, disposition, carriage, action, or word, as becometh not the profession which they make of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way the word of Christ, in the hand of the Spirit of Christ, most mightily prevails, when, and where we least expect. God's love to us in Christ, is free, and always the same: yet we have our maladies. It becomes us to consider this; and out of a sense of his love, to love each other, as standing in one and the same relation to him, and before him, as his dear children. Nothing we are in ourselves takes off the heart of Christ from us; so this very consideration should influence our love to the members of Christ.

The declaration in our text is solemnly striking: *He that loveth not knoweth not God*: then such an one can neither be a believer, nor a christian. This is very pointed: it comes home to the point, and touches to the quick. The apostle meant it should; yet he introduces the whole of this subject as gently as he could. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* The true knowledge of God, leads us into the knowledge of the love of God: and the knowledge of the love of God, leads us to love the children of God. This love increaseth in us, and it is more and more manifested in all gracious fruits and effects, as the discoveries of everlasting love are more and more let in upon our minds. I would here observe, it is of the uttermost importance, that we receive all our thoughts and ideas of God, by ~~the~~ which the knowledge of God is let in upon our minds, and received into our understandings, from the scriptures. We should neither reason on the same, nor receive any apprehension on this great subject from any other quarter: this is the way to be kept from all mistakes. The revelation which the Lord God hath made of Himself, and given unto us in the Bible, is full and clear: there is every thing in it which suits us. It is not an account of what He is ~~in~~ in his incomprehensible Essence: it is an account of what He is to us, in his Divine Persons, and how He is engaged for us, ~~and~~ what he hath willed unto us, and will be to us in Christ, to the ages of eternity: so that the whole of the same suits us: He being the Lord our God. ~~And~~ every part of his word is calculated to encourage our faith and hope: it removes the dread of his majesty from our minds, because the scriptural revelation of Himself, gives us to apprehend Him to be the God of love—The God of mercy—The God of pardon—The God of peace—The God of salvation—The God of all comfort—The God of his people—The God of all grace: all which serve as so many encouragements for us, to stay ourselves on Him—To trust on him—To rely on his immutable will which is declared unto us in his holy and revealed Truth: yea, to triumph because of his word. Let all this be considered, it will then most fully appear, that the thoughts of God, created in the regenerated mind, are formed there by the Holy Ghost, and that from the word: ~~and~~ <sup>they</sup> tend to give the most perfect satisfaction to the enlightened mind; and as to the sum and substance of the same, they amount to a full and demonstrative evidence, that *God is love. So that as love is of God; so He that loveth not knoweth not God.* ~~As~~ this declaration of the apostle should be attended unto by us, ~~so~~ it should produce in each and every one of the Lord's called ones, a two-fold effect: it should in the first place, put us on avoiding every thing in ourselves which might by any means convey an idea of our not loving our fellow-saints: especially such of them, whom we have personal knowledge of: secondly, it should serve as a motive to draw out, and excite us, to the exercise of our love in Christ, and for Christ's sake, towards our fellow believers, and this to the uttermost demonstration of our love and affection for them. ~~And~~ this, it may be, is most completely done at the throne of Christ's grace, in our supplications, intercessions, and requests on their behalf. I have in so many past Sermons, which have been on the subject of loving the brethren, in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of this Epistle, had to say so much on this point, that I shall say no more on it now; but conclude this part of my subject, with these

words of my text, on ~~the~~ which I have been treating. *He that loveth not knoweth not God.* May the Lord add his blessing on what hath been delivered, and lead me on, and through the second part of this present Sermon, so as to convey light, love, and unction, ministerially to your minds, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen. I shall therefore now proceed

2. To this most solemn assertion respecting God himself, which the apostle is fain here to utter, and is this; *for God is love*; it comes in as a reason why *He that loveth not knoweth not God*: yet I shall content myself with what hath been said on this, in the former head of this discourse; and aim to enter into and set forth the Truth contained in this most divine sentence, *for God is love.*

That God is love, is an essential Truth. My first and present subject is, *God is love*: This is the apostle's account of what God is. Had any but an apostle given this definition of God, it must and would, most deservedly, have been treated with the most perfect contempt: for who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection? yet by saying, *God is love*, what is this but to declare the whole of Him! If it be so, then it is declaring what God is in his Essence, in his Persons, in his Perfections, in his will, in his counsel, in his covenant, in his purposes, in his acts, in the whole visible procedure of his will. He is in and throughout the whole, Love itself: Goodness itself: Kindness itself. If the assertion is a truth, it must stand, and be substantiated in all and every thing contained and included in the whole of this: and were we able to enter into and investigate the whole, we should find, and prove the utmost reality in the same: because Truth is Truth: and what is recorded in the word of truth is immutably so: and God is Truth essentially. He is that God which cannot lie. So that what the prophets and apostles have declared of Him, as they delivered the same from Him, cannot but be as true as he is true: and He is *the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* The whole of what God is may be spoken, but the whole of God can never be comprehended: this is, and will to eternity be impossible. All of Godhead consists of Essence, Persons, and Perfections; which are all essential to Deity: the one is as incomprehensible as the other. We cannot understand the Essence of God, the Life of God, the Blessedness of God, the Holiness, Wisdom, and Attributes of God: yet it may with safety be said, that all of God, consists in Essence, Persons, and Perfections. When we come to speak of the thoughts, will, council and covenant of God, this is not to speak or declare what God is. No; this is a declaring of what the Lord is to us: and how he hath in the secrets of his own mind and will, determined within Himself to be so and so to us. Yea, the gospel, take ~~the same~~ in its uttermost extent, ~~takes in~~ comprehends, and makes known the utmost of God's will, and the uttermost of God's decrees towards and concerning the whole creation, and all the works of his hands, both visible and invisible: ~~as~~ also towards all intelligent beings, both in heaven, earth, and hell; yet in the Lord's will towards them, in his predestinating purposes concerning them, and what their eternal and final end may be, the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. It is so: in a general way we are very willing to acknowledge the truth of this; not that we can enter into such a close investigation of the same, as to give the fullest satisfaction to our own minds, or the minds of

others; nor, as I conceive, should we go about to attempt so to do. If Jehovah gives no account of any of his matters, surely he does not call upon any of us so to do: therefore it best becomes us, to cry out with the Psalmist, and say, *Great is our LORD, and great is his power, or, of great power: his understanding is infinite.*

All revealed of God in the scriptures, should lead us to a profound reverence of the Divine Majesty: which is, I conceive best expressed and exercised, in deep, profound, reverential contemplations on Him. It is true, all that God is to his people in Christ Jesus, is the one more, and most immediate subject set before the church, in the sacred epistles: ~~and~~ this most assuredly is the subject here, when the apostle saith, *for God is love.* It cannot be otherwise, because the apostle had said just before, *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* Therefore he must intend here to express what God is to his beloved ones—That he is all love to them—That it is in his very nature—That he cannot but love them. The Divine Essence, the incomprehensible Nature, or Godhead, in which the incomprehensible Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are One, being by essential union, the One living, true, everlasting God, He is love. The Essence and the Three in that Essence are love. *God is love.* Love is an attribute or Perfection in the Godhead: it is not therefore by the apostle said, as if he would swallow up the Godhead and the Persons in the Godhead into one of the attributes or perfections of the same. No; it cannot be so: nor must this by any means be allowed: yet this must be allowed, that the Essence of God is love. God as Essentially and Personally considered, is all love, and nothing but love, as considered in all of this. He cannot but be so, if we consider this subject as it respects the Nature of God, and also the Persons in God. What the Godhead is, that the Eternal Three are, for the Godhead is the fountain of Existence to the Divine Persons, who exist in it, and are one in it, ~~so as that~~ the whole Godhead dwells in each of them, without the least difference or distinction. They exist in such a Personal distinction, as to stand related one to the other, ~~as~~ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, yet they possess and enjoy all the blessedness of one and the same Essential and Divine Nature, one and the same. Now the Essence of God is love: this is so evidenced, as that in and by the enjoyment of the same Essential Nature, the Father loveth the Son, the Son loveth the Spirit, and Father, Son, and Spirit love each other Personally, as distinct in the one same Self-Existing Essence. ~~So that~~ the Essence of God, and the Persons in the one same incomprehensible Godhead, is and are love. Thus the Godhead is the fountain of love: ~~and~~ the Three in Jehovah are love: therefore the apostle says, *God is love.* ~~Thus~~ he leads us to the fountain, God; and declares Him to be to us, the fountain of love. To us he must be all this, seeing the apostle had before said, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

He must mean here the love of the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father. It may be you will ask, what proof have you for this? By what means will you make this appear? It will be well for you not to be too self-conceited on these very deep and high points. Indeed you say true: it should be with caution, we, any of us tread this sacred

ground: but that which follows immediately after the words of my text, proves to a demonstration it is the Person of the Divine Father whose love is here spoken of, and of whom the apostle here says, *for God is love*. It is not the absolute love of Godhead, but a Personal love in the Godhead the apostle is here speaking of: which most clearly appears, and will be most clearly evidenced, if you read the following verses, to the full close of the 14th verse; in ~~the~~ which you have a glorious account given of the manifestation of God's love to us—of the gift of his Son, and the mission of his Son into our world, that we might live through him. The apostle then sets forth the love of God in the gift of his Son to be the propitiation for our sins: then he makes use of it as an argument that we ought to love one another: and that the love of God is evidenced by his dwelling in us—That hereby we have the evidence of all this in ourselves; by his Spirit which he hath given us. ~~So that~~ take the whole into the account, the Father's love in the gift of Christ, and his Spirit unto us, with the testimony of *John* and the rest of the apostles, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, here is the outline of the ensuing verses before noticed. ~~And~~ from the whole of them, it most clearly and fully appears, that what the apostle declares in saying, *God is love*, is predicated of the Father: whose love is so immediately here, and almost always in both Testaments ~~so~~ particularly expressed, to point out that vast and surprising instance of his grace—His loving the whole election of grace; and his so loving them, even in their fallen state, as to give his only begotten Son for them, and unto them, with all the blessings of life everlasting. ~~As it is~~ love in the Person of the Father is the subject before us, when it is here declared, *God is love*, ~~so~~ we see it is not the love of Godhead, but it is the love of the Persons in the Godhead, which is the great and glorious subject revealed, set before us and recorded in the everlasting gospel, which is the word of Truth and Grace. ~~And~~ here in these words, *for God is love*, it is all the glorious and transcendent love of Godhead as expressed by the Person of the Father; who is styled by our Lord Jesus Christ, *God the Father*, is the immediate subject here. Our Lord speaking unto the Jews, said unto them, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” *John vi. 27*. It is the Divine Father, who having conceived in his infinite mind, everlasting good will to the whole election of grace, which he expressed in choosing them in Christ, before the world began, ~~who~~ hath shone forth on and upon them, in the full blaze and meridian of the same in the Son of his love; who is here to be understood in this expression, *for God is love*: and hereby we may be bold to believe, and declare that God is love—All love—That He is nothing but love to his beloved ones, in Christ. O glorious grace! It is all mysterious! It is wholly divine! It cannot be comprehended: neither can it be fully expressed. It may not be amiss to say, all which can be said of it, is in this sentence uttered. The acts of it in the Divine mind, are glorious: the gifts and blessings bestowed are worthy of God: they are all expressive of the greatness of God's love; yet all of them can never convey to the minds of saints on earth, or such as are in Heaven, the fulness of that love which is in the heart of God towards us. The fountain and spring, the cause and motive for which is in God himself. The discoveries and manifestations of the same, are beyond

what we can fully know and investigate—How much more so is the fountain, even God himself. If God will love, who shall be able to say, what is therein contained! None ever expressed the subject better, or found out a more suitable expression for it, than this before us. *For God is love.* This is what God is: this is what the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is to us. He is love, all love, nothing but love to us. And this is nowhere in all the scriptures expressed so fully, as in this one single expression: *for God is love.* It is all, and this is all God is: for in the expressions and in the manifestations of it, his whole mind is swallowed up, and he delighteth therein. This is such a scriptural account of God, as is most sweetly calculated to fill the spiritual mind with holy joy, composure and delight. The apostle makes this declaration here, to inforce on the minds of the beloved of God, what he had before said in this and the former verse, and also as a preface to what he was about to deliver in the two next immediate verses. That you may see the truth of this for yourselves, I will again recite the text and the verse previous thereto, and will also subjoin the two verses following them: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* Surely the latter of these words reflect weight, dignity, and emphasis on the former: as they also serve with light and lustre for us to receive and enjoy the two verses following the text, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

The originality of Love is in and from God himself. He cannot love, but He must manifest Himself, in the fruits and effects of his love. This He cannot do, but these must be equal to Himself: where He loves he will bestow on such according to all the greatness and strength, wherewith he hath loved them: and surely what follows in the next two following verses, I mean the 9th and 10th, is fully expressive of this. It is from them the apostle draws this inference, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* As these are subjects which will follow, and which we are to be engaged in opening and explaining, even to the very close of our present chapter, I shall say nothing more concerning them at this time. My principal design in introducing them here, hath been to shew the connection and harmony of the verses, and their dependency on each other: this hath been aimed at throughout the whole of what I have already gone over. It will not be amiss, if the reader closely attends to this: not only in reading these Sermons, but also exerciseth his own judgment thereon: for connection at all times is very desirable. It is most truly praise-worthy: it is in some cases absolutely necessary: it must be more especially so, when a whole chapter is expounded: and most especially so, when a whole Epistle is opened and explained. May the Lord the Holy Spirit shine, if he please, on the subject which hath been set before you, and delivered unto you, and warm your hearts therewith: this will be the present blessing, as it will be also the best preparation of mind for following the remaining parts of this transcendently glorious subject, in its other branches: *God is Love.* May He shed a sense of it in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Amen.

## S E R M O N   L X .

*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.—1 JOHN iv. 9.*

As the apostle had declared that *God is love*—that it is the whole of God, his Nature, Blessedness, and Perfection—He loves himself, his Son, and Spirit—His Essence is a fountain of Love, and love is of Him, so he now proceeds to open some of the out-goings of the infinite mind, in acts of love towards his beloved ones, his church and people, whom he loved from everlasting, and whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. If God will love, he must have an object for his love. The object must have existence before Him, or he cannot exercise his love thereon: for God himself cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be, that Christ, God-Man, and the Elect in Him, must have existed in the Divine mind as objects of everlasting love, before all time. The Son of the living God, one in the Essence with the Father and the Spirit, was set up to be God-Man before all worlds: as such He was the object and subject of the love and delight of the Essential and incomprehensible Three. In Him the church, the elect, the Bride the Lamb's wife was chosen from everlasting—The one the Head, the other the body—The one the Husband, the other the spouse—The one the Bridegroom, the other the bride: the one was chosen and appointed for the other: they were chosen together; but Christ first in the order of the Divine decrees: yet both at once, as it respects its being an eternal act in the mind and will of God. As the act of election was an act of love, and Christ was chosen for God, and the church for Christ, and as Christ God-Man existed from everlasting, and shone forth as such from the days of eternity, and the church was chosen in Him, and together from everlasting, so Christ and his church as one, had existence in the will, thoughts, mind and purposes of the Divine Father from eternity: and they existing before Him, he could love them, rejoice in them, and express his delight in them, and love them with an everlasting love. As *God is love*; so from it, election, and all its blessings, flow. As Christ's election is an act of the Father's love, so is the election of the church: "Thou hast loved them," says Christ, to the Divine Father, "as thou hast loved me:" to which he adds, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John xvii. 23, 24.

The love of God is the good pleasure of his will—An act of his incomprehensible mind—An act in Christ, God-man, in whom he loved the Persons of the elect; in whom he chose them; in whom he blessed them with all spiritual blessings; in whom he predestinated them to the enjoyment of all the blessedness contained in immediate communion with the Three in Jehovah, in the Person of God-Man; in whom He accepted their persons, and shone forth on them in Him, in and with all the full



blaze of his own inherent love to them. In the acts of God's love in Christ, towards the election of grace, the whole and uttermost of God's love is contained and revealed: all which is most freely, fully, and clearly revealed, and set before us in the everlasting gospel: yet it can never be fully comprehended by us, because it is a subject which hath an infinity in it. Therefore as finite cannot comprehend infinite, it is impossible any of the saints, either on earth or in heaven, can ever comprehend the infinity of the same: nor can all the angels in heaven, or saints before the throne of God, comprehend the fulness of grace contained in everlasting love. It is the manifestation and reality of it, the scripture itself is the revelation of; not the incomprehensibility of the same, which they express. The apostle having said, *for God is love*, proceeds to give an account of the manifestation of the same: this is expressed in the words of our text. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*: in the which words we have the following particulars.

1. An account of the manifestation of the love of God.

2. The persons unto whom it was manifested: it was *toward us*. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us*.

3. In what this manifestation of the love of God consisted: it was in this—*Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world*.

4. The end of this. *That we might live through him*. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*.

The *us* includes the persons who are the objects and subjects of all the love of God. The manifestation of the same to these, was by an open expression thereof: this hath been openly and evidently demonstrated, by the Father's bestowing upon them, the greatest gift of his love which he possibly could—He sent his only begotten Son into the world: and this for the most important end which could be accomplished on the behalf of the *us* included in the text; *that we might live through him*. This is so exactly like what our Lord pronounced to *Nicodemus* in conversing with him, as recorded by our evangelist, in the 3rd chapter of his gospel, that one cannot but conceive it is quoted from the same, and here improved upon: and as that is heart-warming and soul-refreshing, so also is this. As the heart of Christ is all in flames of love, and afresh inflamed therewith, when he there says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." v. 16. So our apostle here, seems to be filled with a parenthesis of wonder, and holy joy, when, as if he was speaking after Christ, he says, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*. May the Lord the Spirit lead me so to open the text, as that our souls may be most divinely influenced, enamoured, and overcome therewith. Even so let it be, O Lord the Holy Ghost, to the praise and glory of thy great and most holy Name. Amen. I am

1. To give an account of the manifestation of the love of God.

Love in the heart of God, was a secret in Him from everlasting, and

wholly unknown before the world began, except to Christ, God-Man; yet it had been put forth towards the whole election of grace: but this in such a way and manner, as for a season they were altogether unacquainted with the same: whilst they were beloved with such a love, as contained the uttermost of God's good will unto them, and to the uttermost of blessedness, grace, and glory to ~~the~~ which they could be possibly, even by God himself, advanced. ~~And~~ whilst the acts of God's will in Christ's Person concerning them and upon them, were such as could never cease, yet they were to be in a state for a season, in ~~the~~ which none of these were to be opened and made known unto them. Still all was in the incomprehensible mind of Jehovah, from everlasting: the same it will be to everlasting. The elect were to be in a creation state of purity and holiness: they were to fall therefrom, and be in a state of sin and misery: they were to be in a redeemed state: they were to be brought to the knowledge of this, by being brought into a regenerated state: from hence they were to be removed into a state of glorification: then into the resurrection state: from thence into the ultimate state of Glory. In all these states the love of God is displayed, ~~and~~ will be displayed towards them, and upon them, agreeable to the divine good pleasure of God's will. The secret and everlasting love of God to his chosen and beloved ones, and his open discoveries and manifestations of the same, should, I conceive be considered as distinct parts, of one and the same love. The former is thus in our context, once for all expressed: *Love is of God.—For God is love.* No words can fully open these assertions: they serve to feed our minds with holy wonder and admiration at the greatness and immensity of what is contained in them: yet the apostle, like his Lord before him, does not attempt to open, and express the incomprehensibility of it. He only sets it forth by the manifestations of it: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* So Christ expressed himself on this subject: and the apostle, as if he would borrow his Lord's words, says, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* Most assuredly, the first act of God's love to the persons of his elect in Christ, which consisted in giving them being and existence in Christ from everlasting, must exceed all other acts of his love towards them: it being the fundamental act of all grace and glory. This love hath been manifested by God himself: and this is the subject of our present text. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us.* The love of God in his own heart, towards the Person of Christ, God-Man, the Head of the whole election of grace, and unto the persons of the elect in Him, is such, so great and infinite, as that the scriptures give us no account of the same, it being such as cannot be expressed. It is the open expressions and manifestations of this love, which the scriptures give us an account of. I therefore proceed

2. To these words of my text: *In this was manifested the love of God toward us:* and will take notice of the persons unto whom the love of God was manifested: it is expressed in the word *us.* This is brought home by the apostle and applied to the *us*—A term made use of by the sacred writers, to include and express the saints and church of God by. It is those very identical persons, who were the objects of the Father's everlasting love; it is they to whom this love hath been manifested;

who are expressed in my text by *us* and *we*: *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

It is a peculiar and distinguishing excellency of the apostolic writers, that they bring home their subjects, with all their weight and energy, to the minds of saints, and then apply them: so that hereby they cannot but be felt in their weight and vast importance. This is the case, let the subject be election, redemption, effectual calling, salvation, or glorification: and it is most generally the case they use the term *us*: as hereby they include themselves, and all the saints to whom they write. This as it serves fully to evidence, that all of them are alike interested in all the blessings and benefits of grace, so it also makes way for them to take the good of them, and that they may enjoy the blessedness thereof in their own souls, and join with all other saints in blessing the Lord for the same. To give evidence of the truth of the assertion, that in all the acts of God's grace, as recorded in the Scriptures, the word *us* is used, and that by the apostles to bring down these subjects, so ~~as~~ that the weight and importance of them may fall on the minds of saints, I shall notice as follows—when the great acts of God, within himself, are expressed by the apostle *Paul*, in his 1st chapter of his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, he uses the term *us*, to shew to all saints their personal interest in all the eternal and internal acts of the Divine mind in Christ, towards them: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” v. 3—6. Here is *us*, and *we*, to shew the interest all saints had in these inestimable blessings: even in eternal election in Christ, and this before the foundation of the world. So as it respects Redemption: in the next words the apostle uses the word *we*; “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” In the next verse the word *us* comes in. “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” Let it be here noticed, the same *us* who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, are the same *we*, who have redemption in his blood. With respect to effectual calling, the word *us* is used by this same apostle, to shew the universality of that blessing to all saints, who are called in one hope of their calling; “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” Rom. ix. 23, 24. So with respect to salvation, the same *us* is used. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” 2 Tim. i. 9. So again, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding

riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Eph. ii. 4—7. Surely in the latter part of this quotation, we have glorification. So also with regard to our being children and heirs of God, and Christ, the *we* and *us*, are made use of; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. viii. 16—18. And our apostle uses the terms, *us*, and *we*, in this Epistle, and throughout it also, as including and comprehending all saints: which whilst it includes the whole election of grace, yet it excludes all other. Therefore it cannot with propriety and truth, as used in the sacred writings and by the sacred writers, apply to any but the saints, and faithful, and called of God in Christ Jesus. *The love of God*, says *John*, was manifested toward us, who are of the election of grace; and we have been refreshed with it, and inflamed thereby, and with it. In this was manifested the love of God towards us—That great love wherewith he loved us before all time: we have lived to see the utmost display of the same: our eyes have seen God-Incarnate—our ears have heard the joyful sound of salvation pronounced by Him—we have tasted, and felt, and handled of him the Word of life. And you who have not in the way *we* the apostles have, yet you having received Him into your mind, do thereby receive all the real and spiritual blessings which are contained in his incarnation and salvation, all which flow from the Father's everlasting love. I proceed

3. To shew in what this open manifestation of the love of God consisted, of which our apostle is here speaking—It was in the Incarnation, gift, and mission of Christ: so it is declared to us in the words of our text, which are these; *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

In the incomprehensible mind of Jehovah, all his love concerning the persons of the elect was conceived from everlasting, with the variety of ways and means, in and by which the same should be displayed and manifested unto them in a time state, so as they might be the more sensibly taken therewith. It pleased the Lord to bring the whole election of grace, and the whole of mankind into an open state by creation pure and holy, in one pure head, as the nature head of all men. It pleased the Lord, notwithstanding his everlasting love to the persons of his people in Christ, to will their fall from that state of creature purity which they were created in, as brought forth in the first man. As this was in the will of God respecting them, so their redemption from it was also pre-ordained. An everlasting covenant transaction took place between the Father and the Son: in which the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, engaged the God-Man, their Lord and Head to act as their Surety and Substitute, and Redeemer. His Incarnation, life and death in our nature were fixed upon as the means of their salvation: all which being settled between the Three in Jehovah, it was immediately upon the fall revealed. It was then, and from thence, the subject of worship and of prophecy, in the which—when Christ was to be manifested in the flesh, with what He was to be, to do, and to suffer, to take away sin,

and bring in everlasting righteousness, was all recorded in the Scriptures of the Prophets: from whence it fully appeared, it was of God: that the whole of it was originally council-work in heaven before all time: the fruit of divine consultation between Jehovah and the Branch, of which the Eternal Spirit was witness, and He revealed the same to holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by Him, the Holy Ghost, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. In the Person of Christ, Immanuel God with us, by his open Incarnation, and the Salvation he was to work out, and most honourably complete, all the love of the Three in Jehovah, was to be reflected and manifested most gloriously. The apostles, and some of the *us* in the words before us, lived in this our world, when the Trinity in Unity, in their distinctive Personal acts, realized this mystery of grace: hence with special reference unto it, the apostle says, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* The matter of fact afforded them support: the love of God in it warmed their hearts: the salvation of Christ set them up on high. Whilst I could wish to preserve the idea of the special favour, and peculiar blessing which the apostles, and believers in their day must have enjoyed, on whom God was pleased to shine immediately, in the full force, of all the mediatorial virtue of Christ's Person, incarnation, blood and righteousness, so as for the apostle to say with special reference to himself, and them, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him;* yet I would not be supine, so as to overlook the subject for ourselves. For all the love of God, to be reflected on their minds, in this most glorious mirror, Christ, and to be manifested unto them, in the Person, Mission, gift of Him, and sending him into our world, this must be glorious indeed! as great an expression of the Father's everlasting love, and as clear a manifestation thereof, as the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father could express! Then this, as clearly set before us in the word of God, and testified of in the word of grace, is as all-sufficient to keep up a lively sense and apprehension of the same in our minds as the Holy Ghost is pleased to maintain a believing knowledge thereof in our hearts, as the true matter of fact, which was realized to their bodily senses, and also to their spiritual faculties, was in theirs. I would therefore here observe, God hath shone forth in all the greatness and majesty of his everlasting love upon his Church in Christ, and thus manifested his everlasting good will unto them. He hath so loved them, as to give his only begotten Son. He hath so loved them, as to send his only begotten Son into the world. He hath so loved, as to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. He hath so loved as to make Him sin for us; to sustain our sorrows, to bear our griefs, to endure our curse, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him: so that the depth of this love, the wonders contained in this exuberancy of grace, may lead us to say with the apostle *Paul*, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 31, 32. When the Holy Spirit is pleased to enlighten any of our minds to receive and apprehend this great subject, and to lead us into spiritual contemplations of it, we

cannot but be swallowed up in soul admirations of the same: and this to an holy wonder and satiety: at which time and in such meditations, we partake of the blessedness contained in this ineffable grace: *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* Whilst election is the highest expression of grace, yet for God to shine in upon us, in the full blaze of his love, in the Son of his love, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to express his love to such a degree, as to give his Son, his own Son, his only begotten Son, the Son of his Nature, the Son of his love, to be manifested in our world, in our nature, by taking the same into union with his Person, so as thereby to become one with us, and thus to be made in all things like unto his brethren—This is grace unutterable! It is love unfathomable! And for our heavenly Father, to shine upon, and within us, in the fullest and utmost display and evidence of his everlasting pleasure and good will of his heart, this is such an inward proof of it to our minds, as we can have no tolerable idea of. Therefore when and where the most profound sense and enjoyment of it is known, there is the most solemn admiration of the same: the true knowledge of this subject is life everlasting: the enjoyments which arise in the renewed mind from the subject, contain the blessings of life everlasting. I go on to my last particular in the text: which is this,

4. The end of all this manifestation of the love of God to us, as spoken of in the text before us. It is *that we might live through him.* It is through the incarnation and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ that we live through Him, a life of justification, peace, pardon, acceptance, and access to God: this is most certainly the meaning of our text; *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

The elect of God in their fallen state, were all sin, corruption, misery and death: in these circumstances God commendeth his love towards them, in that whilst they were yet sinners, Christ died for them. He by his death removed their sins from them. He loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and brought them nigh unto God: so that herein the Father's everlasting love to them is most divinely evidenced: so says our text; *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* This great manifestation of God's love, is recorded in the word of grace: it is as true as God is true: we receive the knowledge of it into our minds from the word of inspiration, and by the Spirit of inspiration. And thus we are brought to believe in this most glorious truth: to receive it into our mind: to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the same: to live on this Truth, and to go on in the belief of this Truth, that *in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* Christ's Person is our glory: in the knowledge of Him we have eternal life. His righteousness is our perfection. His death is our everlasting discharge from the imputation of all our inward and outward sin, and it is our freedom from all condemnation. The Holy Spirit is pleased to realize the subject to us, and within us: by which he brings us to apprehend the vast importance of

the subject, and to experience the efficacy of the same; ~~so that~~ hereby way is made for living over the subject in our hearts: in which we find the truth of what *John* here expresses, that herein the love of God hath been manifested unto us—That hereby it is brought into our minds; and that we are enabled to live through the knowledge of Christ unto God; ~~and this~~ by the faith of the Son of God. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* This is the end of it—That we might live through him—That through Christ we might live unto God. May the Lord bless so far as he pleases what hath been delivered. May we ever remember, from what hath been delivered from Scripture, concerning the whole election of grace, that they are equally interested in all the blessings of grace, salvation, and eternal Glory. The Lord help us to make a right and spiritual improvement of the same. Amen.

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## SERMON LXI.

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*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.—1 JOHN IV. 10.*

THE apostle has been speaking of the Love of God—Of the manifestation of it—How this hath been expressed—Of some of the blessings and benefits of it. Here he more particularly dwells upon it: in what this wonderful love, which God hath manifested towards us, appears most particularly—Our love to God was not the cause of God's love to us—He loved us though we loved not him—He gave the utmost proof and evidence of his love to us, when we loved him not: this he did by this surprising instance of his grace—He sent his Son: irrespective of any love in us to him—He sent his Son to be a Propitiation for our sins. Our apostle is here upon a most supremely glorious subject. The love of God is the greatest thing in God himself, *for God is love.* The outgoings of his heart from everlasting in Christ, God-Man, towards his elect and chosen ones, are most transcendantly great and stupendous. The manifestations of his love to the elect in Christ, in a time state, are worthy of himself—His giving Christ, whom he bestowed upon them, to be their Head in election, to give Him to be their Saviour: this is unspeakable love—To bestow him on them, with the whole perfection of his life and sacrifice, and to give Him with all the blessings of his free, full, and complete Salvation; this is such a full manifestation of everlasting love, as might well make way for the apostle to say, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* All which he does, that saints taking in increasing views and apprehensions of the same into

their own minds, might more and more be swallowed up in the subject. That this might be added to it—the freeness of this love, that it did not flow into their souls upon the foot of any worth or worthiness in them; he says in the words of our present text, by way of addition to what he had uttered in the former, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The subjects before us, are high, sublime, great and most truly glorious. With an intent to open and set forth the same very particularly, so as that we may all receive real benefit from them, I will cast them into the following order.

1. I will take up these words, *Herein is love*; and shew the apostle's meaning in them; which is to set forth to open view, and to the spiritual apprehension, the greatness and immensity of it—That it will bear no compare with any love beside: this being wholly from the fountain *God.*

2. That we ourselves obtained not the least sight and sense of it, by any love of ours towards the Lord. No; there is a negative put to this; such as we can never remove; *not that we loved God.*

3. A positive follows this negative, which is ascribed unto God—*He loved us*: but we loved not him: *not that we loved God, but that he loved us.*

4. A proof of God's love is given; *and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* May the Lord shine upon my mind, and most graciously lead and guide me in and through each of these particulars. And to enter upon and begin, I am

1. To take up these words, *Herein is love*, and shew and express the apostle's meaning in them, which is to set forth to open view, and to the spiritual apprehension of saints, the greatness and immensity of the same—That it will bear no compare with any love beside; it being wholly from the fountain *God.*

The apostle had been before speaking of it, to excite saints to love one another, from this very consideration that love is of God. He then proceeded, to declare that God is love. He then gave an account of the manifestation of God's love—to whom it was manifested: it was to us—In what instance it had been manifested: it was in his sending his only begotten Son into the world, which includes the love of God in the gift of Christ: in the mission of Christ: the end of which was—That we might live through him. Then he brings us to this present verse, saying, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*: and thus he closes the present subject; for what follows after, in the ensuing verses, even to the very close of this present chapter, are but motives, inferences, and uses drawn from this vast subject. Love in God, and God is Love, is a subject boundless and bottomless. The Essence of God, the Persons in God, the Heart of God, the good pleasure of the will of the Three in Jehovah, who is the one true, living, everlasting, ever-blessed God is Love. The objects of his love, are *us*, whom the Father chose in Christ before all time: on whom his will was fixed in Christ, and it was his will to shine on their persons in Christ with all the love of his heart, and in such displays of it, as should fully evidence it to be an everlasting love. He manifested it openly, and set it before them, in the gift of Christ's Person, who was given to be their eternal Head, and whom the



Father also gave to be their Saviour : which was such an expression of love, as both Christ himself, and the apostle speaks of, and dwells upon with unspeakable delight. The love of God in the gift of Christ, can be conceived of by us ; but the love of God from whence that gift proceeded can never be fully apprehended by us. Therefore the apostle having said, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,* adds, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* It is as though he had said, the whole of God, with the whole of his love, is set before you in these stupendous instances and displays of the same : it all shines forth upon us and within us in Christ : our election is in Him : our redemption is in Him : our whole completeness and perfection is in Him. All the love of the Holy Trinity to us, is in Him ; and it is all set forth before us, by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Person and gift of his only begotten Son. This is the greatest thing which can be said of God, that *love is of God—for God is love.* And this is the greatest manifestation of the same to the elect, in their fallen sinful state, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life : so said Christ himself. And our apostle being a witness of this great and astonishing gift and expression of the Father's everlasting love, and he having declared that *God is love,* says, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* God's love which is an essential Perfection of his Nature, is as immutable as God, and there can be no increase nor decrease in it. The apostle had said, *God is love.* He is as truly this now as ever. His Nature must change, before he can cease to be love itself, and everlasting love, the everliving fountain, and the perpetual spring of it to all his saints. He would have them to be looking at his love manifested in his gift of Christ, and his setting before them the whole fulness of his love to them in the Person of his Son : and this is the apostle is here aiming at, and would gladly dwell upon ; yea, he would have all the saints have this subject uppermost in their minds. He knew no better method he could adopt to promote and engage their minds hereunto, as likely to be effectual, as to set before them the love of God : to speak of it to the very uttermost : to express the manifestation of the same : which having done so far as the Holy Spirit enabled him ; he calls upon them to look on and consider the subject. As all the love of God is in Christ, and as God hath manifested all his love unto them, in the gift, mission, and Salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as the Father hath shone forth in the full glory of his love upon his whole church in Christ, the glorious Mediator, he therefore says, *Herein is love.* Here, says the apostle, you may see the uttermost and most glorious evidence and manifestation of the same. The Father's everlasting love, is reflected in its hottest beams, so as to refresh the saints, in Christ, as the glorious Mediator ; as he hath put away sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. It is to this great and one grand point, which the apostle is here upon, and is advancing unto : *Herein is love.* The whole of God is love. He is all this in the Son of his love. He hath shone forth in Him, to the very uttermost expressions of the same. He hath manifested himself in Christ, to be the God of love. He hath realized

all this openly in the Person of Immanuel. In sending his only begotten Son into our world ; it is here to be seen that God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus, is Love. Herein it is expressed. Here it shines : and the Person of Christ, and the gift of Christ, and the incarnation of Christ, and the propitiation of Christ for our sins, are so many standing memorials of this. I might here observe, the apostle would have saints, the *us*, of whom we took notice in the verse before the present ; to be wholly engaged in viewing, and reviewing the subject. He well knew, it was only as they received the same into their minds, by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, they would be brought under the blessed influence of the same. Beloved, it is our case, we are all looking out for an experience of the love of God, to the neglect of looking out, and praying for a doctrinal knowledge of the love of God : it is from hence we really miss of that enjoyment of the love of God, which is heaven upon earth. The grand subject of the Bible, consists in the revelation which is made in it, concerning the everlasting love of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, towards an elect remnant of Adam's posterity, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world : and also how everlasting love hath been displayed towards them, and been manifested unto them, by means of an everlasting covenant, which obtained between the Eternal Three, on the behalf of the elect—How this hath been carried into execution by the Person, incarnation, and finished obedience and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ—That it is by the divine light, teaching, and revelation of the Holy Ghost, that we are brought to the knowledge of them, so as thereby to enjoy in our own souls, the blessings, comforts, and benefits thereof ; yet we must know and clearly perceive the foundation of these important truths in our renewed minds, or we cannot be comforted by them. We are not at any time filled with all joy and peace, because we believe on Jesus. No ; it is in our believing in Jesus, we are thus filled : we must have the true knowledge of the subject first, and then as the mind is properly exercised thereon, the fruits will consequently, and of necessity follow. If the drift of the holy Scriptures were closely attended unto, this would most clearly appear : it is the true and clear knowledge of the subject, which produces its own proper effects. When our minds are enlightened into the true knowledge of the doctrine of everlasting love, as revealed and recorded in the everlasting gospel, it is thereby we are led to see, *Herein is love*—That the whole of it is most gloriously recognized, and is most fully and expressly set before us, in Christ. So that the apostle in the words before us, is shewing the whole reality of God's being Love, and that He was nothing but love to his beloved ones ; which was so fully realized in the Person and salvation of his only begotten Son, that saints might view it for themselves, and be fully satisfied with the Truth of the same. *Herein is love!* It cannot be more fully expressed : it cannot be more completely manifested : you cannot have more substantial evidence of it : it is impossible more full demonstration can be given to you, than there is in the Person of Christ, and his complete and finished salvation, of God's love to you. God is love. He hath manifested his love. He sets it all before you in the Person of Christ. *Herein is love.* Such as can never be comprehended ! Nor enjoyed : no ; not by all the saints and angels in heaven ; neither by all, or any of the saints below. We may enjoy, and we shall in heaven, as we also do now, whilst we are here

below, God's love in Christ, and have a real sense of the same in our minds, whilst we can by no means comprehend it: so in heaven, whilst we shall enjoy the same, and have full and free communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the blessings, and blessedness of the same everlasting love; yet we shall never be able to comprehend it. No; this is utterly impossible. Our apostle would have saints, the *us* in the text, survey it: look at it: take into their minds the uttermost conceptions thereof: as hereby they could not but be swallowed up of the same. And from hence they would be led further and further into the subject itself, and hereby have a spiritual perception of what their views and enjoyments of it would be in the state of Glory. He well knew, this would keep them in their proper place: they would hereby know they had nothing to glory in but the Lord—That it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy—That not an elect angel, or an elect man, ever had that in them, which could cause God to love them, and that with an immutable love. He therefore, whilst he sets before the *us* in the former verses, and in this also, the love of God to them, and the instances in which he had expressed the same unto them, comes forward with an assertion, by which he for ever shuts up their mouths, as if their loving God, which they actually now did in consequence of the love of God having been manifested unto them, was the cause of God's love to them. No; it was not: *Not that we loved God.* This brings me to my next particular.

2. Which is this—That we ourselves obtained not the least sight and sense of God's love to us, nor of the wonderful manifestation and evidence which he had given of the same, in the Person, gift, and incarnation of Christ, by any love of ours towards the Lord. No; it was not so. There is an absolute negative put upon this: such an one as can never be removed: neither in time, or in eternity; *not that we loved God. He loved us, but we loved not him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

The greatness of God's love, is equal to the greatness of his Majesty. As it is a Perfection of his Nature, and is Essential with it, so he hath purposed within himself to display, and manifest the same, in a way, as the whole glory will to eternity redound unto his most glorious Name. Whilst the whole Essence of God is love, yet the exercise and manifestation of the same, in its open discoveries towards the elect, are acts of his will, which are altogether free and sovereign: they proceed from the good pleasure of his will. He willed by one act the utmost good and blessedness of the elect in Christ. And as this was an eternal act, and like his Nature immutable, so by predestination he appointed every thing which should befall them in their creation-state, and also all through time whilst they should remain here below. Election is an act of God's will. Predestination is an act of God's understanding. The elect in their fallen state, were without the true knowledge of God: they knew not God: they loved not God: their minds, hearts, affections, and wills, were wholly taken off the Lord. More might be said, but this is sufficient for the present purpose, to explain the words of our text, and prove the truth of the same; which is, *That we loved not God: yet he loved us.* This the apostle aims to fix on the minds of those saints; to the intent they might be humbled under such views of themselves as

all this included ; and also might be led to admire the greatness, freeness, and sovereignty of the Divine favour towards them. God's love could not be founded in their having loved Him : He loved them first : neither could his love be a love to them, in consequence of their being so taken with his love to them, that they loved him in return for his such great love unto them, so as that hereby there was alike interchangeable love. No ; it was not so : *we loved him not*. What can more fully express the sad, lost, wretched state of our minds ! yet such was our state and case. And God would for a season have it so, that thereby the freeness and high sovereignty of his love might the more fully appear. He loved us from everlasting. He loved us when we were fallen, and continued in our fallen state. He loved us when we were enemies, and ungodly : so that there could be no cause in us why He should love us : it must wholly originate and spring from within Himself. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The persons of the elect, are the objects of God's love. His love to their persons is immutably the same, in every state through which they pass. Their persons are everlastingly precious in his sight. He beholds them in the Person of Christ, God-Man, and rejoices over them and in them, in Him. So that whilst the fall, and the corruption of their minds, wrought a most sad and awful change in them, yet it wrought no change in God's love to them. Yea, every state through which they have passed, only proved the invincibility of God's everlasting love unto them : so that as here, this apostle says, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* So another apostle saith, " But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ; ) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus : That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. ii. 4—9. Thus as in election all is of grace : so the salvation of the elect, is of grace also. And none of the whole election of grace, have, or can have to eternity any thing to glory in but the Lord. Now having, as I conceive, said enough on the negative put on our loving God, as if that was any cause of God's loving us, or of his manifesting his love to us ; which it most certainly could not be, seeing God loved us before we had any being or existence—It was because He loved us, that He gave us being and existence in Christ before the foundation of the world : and out of that infinity of love it was, and is, He hath expressed his love towards us in all his acts of love to us, as he hath done, I will add no more to this ; but proceed

3. To the positive which follows this negative, which is ascribed unto God. *He loved us.* We loved not Him : yet he loved us, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This is affirmed in contradiction to the former words, contained in the negative : which we ourselves cannot but fall down before, and most humbly submit unto.

God is so infinitely and incomprehensibly above and beyond the creature, let it be placed in what view and state before Him it may, that

it must be all of his own royal bounty, whatsoever good he is pleased to impart unto it. That super-creation being, union, and communion to, and with Himself, he decreed the elect unto, must all proceed from his own royal favour and free grace. It was from Himself alone that he loved us in Christ: it is most truly blessed to have a right apprehension of this. The apostle aims to bring the weight of this on the renewed and spiritual mind, in saying, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*. The *us* are the objects and subjects of all this love; on whom it hath been expressed: on whom it hath been displayed: and in whom, and unto whom the whole of it hath been most graciously made known, and hath been most gloriously manifested. *He loved us*: so says the apostle, putting himself amongst the number contained in the *us*, as he before did in the term *we*. *Not that we loved God, but that he loved us*. As this application was under the immediate influence and testimony of the Spirit of God upon the minds of those, who were here immediately the subjects of this address; so it must have been full of peculiar energy and consolation unto them. Surely it must have most deeply affected their minds, and drawn forth their whole souls towards the Lord. As the love of God to *us*, is wholly from Himself, as it originates and springs up in his own infinite mind from himself alone, and is the good pleasure of his will concerning us, in Christ Jesus; so it serves to increase in our spiritual views and perceptions of it, vast ideas of the same. To know ourselves to be the beloved of God: that God hath borne an everlasting good will to our persons; and that all he bestowed on us in Christ before all time; that all he hath and will bestow upon us in time; and that all he will manifest of his love to us in Heaven, throughout the ages of eternity, is out of good will to us, as considered in Christ, and as one with Him; to have the true scriptural idea of this, formed in our minds by the Holy Ghost, is blessedness and grace, such as we cannot express: it is wholly supernatural and divine. And it is the fruit of election. So that such as are thus favoured, have in the same a most blessed evidence of their personal interest in the love of God. They joining with the *us*, they may well utter their mighty joys in expressing their admiration at the free favour of God towards them: at his love to their persons in Christ, and at the acceptance of their persons in Him: so that they surveying the subject, may well cry out, *God is love*. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. It is as we receive these truths into our minds, we enjoy the blessedness of the same in our hearts, and are thereby drawn forth, and excited to give the Lord glorious praise. I proceed to my next particular;

4. To take a view of the proof of God's love to us, which is given in the words before us; *and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. Herein is love! It shines forth in its utmost vigour and glory: it hath been reflected on us, in all its full blaze: in all its brightest beams: in its noon-tide splendour: so as that our souls have been most divinely influenced with the same. Our minds have been enlightened: our hearts inflamed: our wills swallowed up, and our affections drawn forth, and fixed on God in Christ, as our supreme object and subject, our everlasting portion, treasure, our All in All. *Herein is love, not that we loved*

*God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

This is love to the uttermost extent and expression thereof. We can profess and declare the blessings of it ; but we cannot speak of our having the blessedness of the same bestowed upon us as having any claim to it. No ; we loved not God : we were born into this world in a state of sin. We remained in it for a season ; during the whole of which we loved not God : yet God loved us all that season. He viewed our sins and sinfulness, and sent his Son into our world to save us. He became the propitiation for our sins : in all this he hath manifested his love to us : so that we cannot but say, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The subject is so immensely great, that the apostle is continually varying it. In the former verse it was, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him :* in this it is, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* God's manifestation of his love to us, in the incarnation of Christ was great ; so also was the love of God, as it shone forth in the great end and design thereof—That we might live through Him, a life of perfect justification and pardon before Him : the completion of which was perfected by our Lord's propitiatory offering of Himself, which he takes particular notice of, and fully expresses here : *God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The relation between God and Christ should be taken notice of. Father and Son are correlates. The eternal Father sent his eternal Son, who was by Divine constitution God-Man. His being sent into our world, implies *local motion*. He must therefore be God and Man, as such he might remove from heaven to earth, from the bosom of the Father into our world. He could not as a Divine Person in the Essence, equal with the Father and the Spirit, the one incomprehensible Jehovah. It is Christ as set up in one of the Persons in the incomprehensible Jehovah, who was the Head of his body the church. With whom the Divine Father covenanted on the behalf of the elect : whom he gave to be a covenant of the people, and whom he sent into the world to be the propitiation for our sins. These are all expressive of the love of God, as expressed, displayed, and exercised towards the elect in their lost and fallen condition. Christ their Head, became the Mediator of reconciliation : and He hath most completely effected it by His covenant engagements, and in his incarnate state : in the which he fulfilled all righteousness : made his soul an offering for sin. He bore the sins of all his people in his own body on the tree : made his whole Person a sacrifice for them : and thus he became the propitiation for their sins. All which was founded on the will of the Divine Father. Hence the whole of it is here attributed to his love : *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* If we had not had sins, there had been no need of his being the propitiation for them. It is here brought in, to set before us the exceeding greatness of the love of God unto us—That He being all love in his Nature, will, counsel and covenant of grace towards us, herein expressed the same most fully unto us—*He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* May we view the love of God, as herein manifested and displayed, that our hearts being warmed herewith, we also

may cry out in the words of our text, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This was an astonishing proof of the Father's love to us, and a most surprising evidence of the continuation of it to our persons, notwithstanding all our sin and sinfulness, and all the guilt, filth and demerit contained in sin. It serves to enhance the glory and dignity of this subject, by considering the two-fold relation Christ stands in to his church: viz. that of a Head, and that of a Saviour: and the distinct blessings flowing from Him to us, under the view of these distinct relations. From Him as our Head, we receive all those supernatural, and supercreation blessings, which were bestowed upon us in Him, in eternal election; and which were bestowed upon us in him as our eternal and supercreation Head: who is our Head of eternal life, grace, and glory. As he is also our Redeemer; and stands in this relation to us, by the Father's call and will, that He should undertake our salvation. So as such, and he having finished the work that the Father gave him to do, He is become the Author of our eternal salvation. According to these two distinct relations which he stands in to us, he hath a two-fold glory—That of a Head, and that of a Saviour: in both which the glories of the Father's everlasting love shine forth in his Person, and also in his mediation in all the fullest perfection thereof, on the saints both on earth and in heaven—Here on us below that we cannot contain it: therefore we cry out, O the depth! In heaven it is so radiant, and so fills the minds of the glorified, that they are swallowed up in the enjoyments thereof; so that they with all their praises cannot utter it. As Christ, God-Man, is the Father's one object, and centre; and all the elect are in Him, and one with Him; so it is in Him the Father fully shines upon them; as their Head, and through Him as the glorious Mediator; who became their Sacrifice, and is now before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, in all the virtue and eternal dignity of his mediatorial work and office, the Lord their Righteousness and Propitiation. And it is in Him, the Father beholds the whole church, as the objects and subjects of his immutable love, complacency and delight. And through Christ the channel of all communication to the whole church, all the blessedness of everlasting love, in all the vast designs of the same, with all the outgoings of it, flow into the minds of the saints, so as for them to have the fullest enjoyments thereof, which God himself can impart unto them. All now, on earth, in heaven, and throughout the ages of eternity, will flow into the souls and bodies of the saints, even when they are consummated in glory, out of the inexhaustible fulness of the God-man. He is the church's All. And the church is His All. *Herein is love*: such as may well engross our whole minds: satisfy our whole desires: fill our minds with holy peace, and keep and maintain the peace of God in them, *That God hath loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The true knowledge, and spiritual perception of this, makes way for our true communion with God and Christ, in the belief of the same, through the grace of the Eternal Spirit. May what hath been delivered be accompanied to your minds, by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost, to the praise and glory of the Father and the Son, to your souls' comfort and advantage. Amen.

## S E R M O N LXII.

*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.—*

I JOHN IV. 11.

IN these words the apostle signifies, that a right and proper view of the free, sovereign love and grace of God unto us in Christ Jesus, our eternal Head, as it hath been manifested towards us in Him, our most glorious Mediator and Saviour, and as this is set home upon our hearts, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, cannot but constrain saints and such as are one with Christ, and are partakers of like precious faith with themselves in Him, and communion with Him, to love one another with a free spiritual love. And this out of mere good will to Him: and without hope of reward or recompense from each other: this being like the love of God to them: it being, as thus expressed, altogether Godlike and divine. The words before us, are an inference, deduced by the apostle from what he had been delivering in the former verse, on the subject of the love of God. It is the method our apostle pursues throughout this whole Epistle, to bring in here and there, such all commanding, and influential truths, as of themselves cannot but arrest the spiritual mind, and draw forth the same to study and contemplate the word of grace delivered: by the means of which, saints feeling the warmth and influence of the subject, are thereby excited to express their love and affection to the Lord for his great love wherewith he hath loved them. As the apostle had declared the love of God unto these saints to whom he is here writing; and as he had set before them, the Father's ineffable love unto them, and this in this most transcendent expression of it, in the mission of Christ, who was sent into the world to be the propitiation for our sins; so he here makes use of all this by way of excitement to them, that the saints might hereby express their sense and gratitude for the same, in and by their mutual love and regard towards each other. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

To open and explain the words, so as to sermonize upon them, it may be observed that the text naturally divides itself into two parts. We have

1. An address: *Beloved, if God so loved us!*
2. The inference drawn from the foregoing: *we ought also to love one another.* In speaking on the address, notice will be taken of the same—Of the persons thus addressed: with an emphasis added to the subject. The word *if* is used with a design to greaten and strengthen the weight of the exhortation. And the word *so*, to advance the idea of the incomprehensibility of this love. *Beloved, if God so loved us.* This is to be the subject of our first particular. In the which I hope to have all the substance expressed and set before you: for that is the end and design of an *Exposition*.

As to the second particular, contained in these words, *We ought*



also to love one another, which is the inference drawn from the former address, we have the word *ought* put on it. This shall be taken notice of: it being expressive of the obligation the beloved of God are under to love one another. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* I am

1. To observe, as I have already said, the text divides itself into two equal parts; the particular I mean to enter on is, to take notice of the address; the persons addressed; as also of the emphasis added to the subject; the word *if* being used with a design to greaten it.

The word *Beloved*, in the mouth and from the lips of our apostle, distils a sweetness inexpressible, he being himself so full of love to Christ and saints. We have had it before, and made some observations on it, therefore we need not go over the same again. This general one may suffice: our apostle is a most exact imitator of his Lord; who in his last Sermon immediately before his Passion, as recorded by *John* in the 15th and 16th chapters of his gospel, speaks most abundantly of his own love, and of the Father's love, and of the Spirit's love to the church, which would be manifest by his mission to the church after our Lord's ascension, by his descent on the apostles, by his leading them into all Truth; on these accounts Christ gives these to know, how well-pleasing it would be in his sight that his disciples should love one another as he had loved them. So here, at the 7th verse of this chapter, the apostle had said, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* Thus in this full meridian and shine, in this vast exuberancy of love, he ends his subject as he began it, with the word *Beloved*. For what follows, is on the glorious fruits and effects of God's love, as the same are felt and enjoyed within us. What is here said, and in what also follows to the end of this chapter concerning the operation of God's love in our own minds, and how it increases in us an outward evidence of the same, in our love one to another, for the Lord's sake, all this shews itself openly. Now as the apostle was of himself so influenced, under the supernatural influences of everlasting love, which he felt and enjoyed in his own soul, to excite to brotherly love; so he here again uses the word *Beloved*. He used it when he called upon the saints, to take a view of the Father's love to the elect, manifested in the grace of adoption. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* chap. iii. 2. He uses the same term, in the 21st verse of the same chapter. He had been speaking of the confidence real saints, in the exercise of brotherly love, for Christ's sake, might have before God—That whilst they were supplicating the Divine Majesty for the bestowment of blessings on others belonging to the household of faith, they were perfectly persuaded of the sincerity of their hearts towards them. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

The apostle begins this chapter with the word *Beloved*: so he doth the 7th verse, and also this. *Beloved*: they were so to God: this is most evidently included in the three former verses, in the word *us*. This

hath been before treated of; yet it cannot but be here added, that under the evidence of all this, he might well express the same term to them here, *Beloved*: as it could not but be a mean of setting home the subject before them with the greater impression on their minds; and there was reason for this, he being about to dilate and dwell upon the subject. The persons addressed are saints: they are not here such as only professed Christ and that they were the subjects of everlasting love: but all this was the actual truth concerning them. If you request and demand actual proof of this; it is ready to be produced: you shall therefore have it, and that with all scriptural clearness and evidence. The apostle styles them at verse 4th, *Little children*. He says, *We are of God*. He then includes himself and them also in the word *us*, and in the word *we*, and says *God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. Then he says, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*. The *us*, the *we*, the *Beloved* in and throughout the whole of this Epistle, and in our context, belong to saints. None can deny this, who will be at the expense of searching the context: or, I might say, the whole former part of the Epistle, in which the words, *we*, *us*, *Beloved*, are used; and that in immediate reference to the church of the Most High God, the members of Christ, and believers on Him.

But I would proceed to the emphasis which is added to the subject by the word *if*; *Beloved, if God so loved us*. It may not here be amiss to take up the whole subject thus, and afterwards proceed to the word *if*. It seems in a very easy and familiar way of address, that the apostle is bringing the whole weight and importance of his former subjects on the very minds of those saints whom he is here addressing. No subjects could be of greater importance: none could lead into personal communion with God and that to a walking before the Lord unto all well-pleasing, like unto them. There must be a knowledge of God in his love, before the gifts of his love can operate upon us: then of the manifestation of the love of God, and in what way this hath been displayed; and that we are interested in all this, and that this hath been towards us so as that we are interested in the same; or we cannot be properly influenced and solemnly affected therewith. I will acknowledge that Truth as Truth, God's love as it is his love, and the way by which He hath been most graciously pleased to manifest the same, have an all-sufficiency of greatness, grandeur and majesty to captivate and engross the spiritual mind, and carry all before them: yet when the whole of this, with all contained in the same, is brought down to the spiritual mind—is brought down, so as to be fixed thus—all this belongs to you and you: it certainly is most likely to fill the mind with the greater admiration of the subject, and of what is contained therein. It is herein that one of the great excellencies of the scriptures consists—They not only give us a full and clear revelation of God's love, in its originality and eternity, in its freeness and sovereignty, but we have also in the same, a record of the acts of the Eternal Three recited; as also, how the minds of saints in and throughout all past ages and generations, and of those throughout this very present, and all succeeding ones are, and will be affected. It is a very gross conceit to apprehend, saints as saints, are in one age differently affected with the truths of God, from what saints have been, or may be in another: there may be one gospel truth more stood up for in one age, and another in a

succeeding. It is awful to add, there does not seem any one gospel truth, in our yet present day stood up for: a general idea and notion that the gospel is the gospel, and that this prevails throughout the land, seems to me to be the whole which prevails with all whom we esteem to be christians amongst us: yet not one single truth is singled forth, stood up for, or scripturally explained. No; terms, expressions, and sounds, seem to be all the people look for. And any explanation of terms, truth, and doctrines, is not looked for, nor by any means expected. Should it be attempted, it is, and would be found treated with contempt: yet without it, the Lord's people can neither be fed, or nourished up unto everlasting life: and without they are, it is impossible they should be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. *Beloved, if God so loved us!* The *if* here cannot be that of doubting: neither can it be that of supposition; because it had been most positively declared that God had loved, and given the uttermost demonstrations of the same: no words could more fully declare this, than those that the apostle had made use of in verses 7, 8, 9, and 10: and the words of our text are an improvement thereon. So that it seems the *if* is thus to be understood—*Beloved, insomuch, or, forasmuch as God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* The word *so* is quoted from our most precious Lord Jesus Christ: who not undertaking to speak of the love of God, but by one grand effect, gift and manifestation thereof, expresseth himself thus. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* No doubt but our apostle found a peculiar, spiritual, heavenly sweetness in speaking on this most wonderful subject, *the love of God, in the manifestation of it, in sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Beloved, if God so loved us! It is to add an emphasis to the subject that the word *so* here comes in. It is to convey an idea of the subject to the mind, of the greatness and immensity of the same. No words are sufficient; therefore as the spiritual mind is capable of conceiving above what it can ever fully apprehend, and far above and beyond what it can ever possibly express, the apostle here makes use of the word *so*, as his dear Lord had on the same subject before him done, to set a lustre and weight, a dignity and majesty on the same. No words can ever fully express the love of God. When we are swallowed up in holy contemplations on it, then it is we enjoy the greatest apprehensions of it more so, than when we either write, preach, or speak about it. The subject is best suited to the intellectual faculty, and contemplative mind: it can only be received, apprehended, and enjoyed by faith: the word *so* as here used is suited to all this. No doubt but this also may be added to the same—The apostle would the saints he is here writing unto, should have their own renewed minds exercised and engaged on this vast subject: and say, if they could, what was contained in God's so loving them; not that it will ever be known: yet the mind will be kept up in perpetual vigour and exercise on it in heaven for ever and ever. Seeing *God so loved us*, as all the men on earth cannot say; as none of the angels in heaven can declare; as none of the saints around the throne of God and the Lamb, can fully apprehend: yea, with such a love, which is fed by a perpetual spring continually arising in Jehovah's infinite mind, which will never fully and to the uttermost of the same be

apprehended by the whole election of grace, even when they are completed in eternal Glory, let us live in views of it, which as we receive the same into our minds, we shall enjoy it in our hearts, and under the powerful influence thereof, be living to the praise and glory of God. It is herefrom this inference is drawn, *we ought also to love another*. It may not be clear to every one, yet it cannot be disputed, but that this is the real truth and ground-work, foundation and drift of this whole Epistle—That the minds of the godly, rightly and truly principled in the knowledge and doctrines of everlasting love, the Person, Incarnation, Righteousness, Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the perfection of his finished Salvation; and that the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in the saints, is the immediate spring, life and source of all spiritual life, and spiritual operations within them, and this upon the footing of the Father's everlasting love to these persons in Christ, as also in consequence of these persons' union to Christ, and because He has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood—they being brought to the knowledge and belief of all this, are addressed as here they are. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*. I am now to speak to the

2nd particular, which is contained in these words, *we ought also to love one another*. This, which is the inference drawn from the former address, we have the word *ought* put on: which will be taken notice of, it being expressive of the obligation the beloved of God are under to love one another. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*,

Having gone through the former part of this verse, *Beloved, if God so loved us*, I now enter on the latter part contained in these words; *we ought also to love one another*. The inference is very clear, very just, and very interesting. If all the beloved of God are loved with so great a love, and are alike the objects and subjects of the same, then they are under the deepest obligations to love one another they possibly can be. This arises from their being alike the objects of God's love: and his love being a free love, a sovereign love, an everlasting love, without any motive but in his own will. So, love to one another, out of a sense of God's love to us for the sake of Christ and our relation to Him, and to each other in Him, should be a free love: not by any means arising out of any mercenary affection. It should be free: the real act of a spiritual mind to each other; and this out of our love to Christ, and to each other for his sake; the whole of which is to be swayed and influenced by the knowledge of the love of God in Christ to us. We are too apt to overlook this—What we are exhorted to, respecting love to the brethren, and as it respects our exercising the same; it is all from supernatural principles and motives: it may be this may be too little noticed. There is a common disposition in the minds of men, to be pitiful towards fellow-men when they may be in affliction and distress: we speak not against this; only it is necessary to keep all this in its proper place: there is no grace in this; by which we mean to say, this does not proceed from love to such and such, because the Lord loves them: or, because they are members with us, as the mystic body of Christ, neither is it because they are looked upon as partakers of Christ. No; it wholly proceeds from a natural feeling towards our fellow mortals in distress: it is well it should be so: it is absolutely necessary it should be so. The whole world is one

grand universal hospital; all, and every individual in it are full of disease. The humanity and natural feeling there is in the whole human race, is of the Lord, as the great governor of the world; and it must redound to his praise. Did He not thus act upon the minds of men, creatures could not subsist in their creature state as they do: all assistance rendered by any of us, one to another, is of God; neither are the kind and friendly acts of one creature to another to be spoken against. No; by no means: I now speak for myself; no; let the motive be what it may: because, if relief is granted, if there be any mitigation granted, it is a benefit, such as should never be denied. No: not in the least: it argues great ingratitude if it be. Many of these and such natural acts are good in their place: but they do not proceed from the grace of God: they are not the fruits and effects of a new and supernatural birth: they are not therefore what the apostle is here, and throughout this epistle speaking of, and exhorting unto. Therefore let what hath been expressed be sufficient to say, when we deny natural acts of liberality and beneficence exercised towards such and such in distress—these to be spiritual acts; that we are not enemies to these as considered in themselves, as necessary natural acts: we are not. The world could not subsist without these; yet all of these prove no man to be in Christ, neither do they evidence any man to be a believer in Christ: for these are very abundant, and often found where there is not the least knowledge of Christ. The knowledge of Christ must of necessity, precede faith in Christ: this must be the root which bears and blossoms, and produces love to the brethren. Examine this Epistle through and through, and you will find this is precisely the truth of it. And as so much hath been, from time to time said, as we, in going on in the *Exposition* of this Epistle, had so much of necessity to say hereon, it is time to put a stop to this part of the subject, lest the same ground be of necessity gone over and over again, and the very same things over and over repeated; which may be tiresome to the mind: as our everlasting life and salvation, depend not upon any of these: it does not depend on our faith, much less on the fruits and effects produced by our faith. To return therefore to our present subject, with a design to close it in an agreeable manner, in perfect harmony with the former part of our text, *we ought also to love one another.*

It appears the Lord's people in *John's* time, lived more in the true knowledge, spiritual apprehension, and belief of the great truths and matters of fact, concerning the Father's everlasting love, and the Person, work, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this as recorded in the gospel, and as recited by the apostles and ministers in that day, than any of us do now. The subject being kept up in their minds, exhortations to brotherly love were more influential, and effectual in producing their most blessed fruits and effects: hence it was sufficient to say, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* The word *ought* is expressive of a divine obligation, on such and such, to love one another. The word *also*, is expressive of the manner in the which love one to another is to be expressed; it is to be freely, without hope of recompence: it is to be a free love, out of mere spiritual good will, without any motive or reason, but what the love of God in Christ Jesus to us, draws forth and excites. The word *ought* seems to me to be borrowed from Christ: it was a word used by Him, when he was conversing with two of his disciples, to whom he appeared on the first day after his resurrec-

tion from the dead: to whom he said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke xxiv. 25, 26. The word *Ought* as here made use of by Christ, is very expressive of the necessity of the death of Christ. It was to be so, it could not but be so, there was a necessity it should be so, it ought to be so. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* If it had not been so, the counsel of God, and his will expressed before the world was, could not have been accomplished: the covenant of grace could not have been executed: the prophecies could not have been fulfilled: the types of Christ, which respected his bloodshedding and death, could not have been realized—That they might, there was therefore a necessity for the death of Christ: all this was to go before his entrance into glory. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* So here, our *John* says, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* This *ought* is laid upon us, because we are the beloved of God. It is therefore brought in thus; *Beloved, if, or, inasmuch, or, forasmuch as God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* This is an inference drawn from God's loving us: yea, from his so loving us as we ourselves cannot express; nor shall ever have in this present state, any tolerable ideas of. It is God's so loving us, and his so manifesting his love to us, as he hath done in Christ, is the motive and argument that the apostle makes use of, to excite saints to love one another, and on the which he rests the whole weight of his address and his exhortation to them, to lead them to the exercise of all this. Then this confirms what hath been before delivered, that natural acts, performed by natural men—themselves aiming to shew their own natural compassion to such as are, or may be in distress; and let the beneficial effects produced by the same be as they may; are quite distinct and different from what our apostle treats of throughout this Epistle, under the article of brotherly love: or, love of the brethren: or, one brother loving another as a brother in Christ, and as such and for the Lord's sake. The word *ought* here, according to the general account already given of the same, must imply that saints as saints, are under a divine obligation and that from the Lord himself, to love one another: and this obligation springs from his great love in Christ, wherewith He hath so loved them as it cannot enter into their hearts fully to apprehend and conceive of. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

It follows from hence, the love the apostle calls for the exercise of is wholly of an heavenly original: it springs from the knowledge of God's free, full, everlasting love to us, in his dear Son: it is increased and maintained in our minds one towards each other, from supernatural views and apprehensions of God's love to us, in his beloved Son. It is as our hearts are warmed with it, and we have real and blessed communion with the Father and the Son in the same, and this by the grace of the Holy Ghost, that we can exercise this grace of the Spirit towards them. If it be so, it must be a spiritual act of the mind in Christ towards one the other: there is no doubt but this will produce all the acts which are connected with love to one another, as the brethren and sisters in Christ: and the more we are led into increasing knowledge of Christ, and this in

a way of personal communion with Him, the more our love for each other will be necessarily promoted and increased. If it be a spiritual disposition and affection, exercised in the faith of Christ, in the Name of Christ, for the sake of Christ, to the honor and for the glory of Christ, this enobles it: we need not wonder the apostle speaks so much of it. Whereas, looking at it in any other point of view, it cannot but appear wonderful, such an one as the apostle *John* should dwell so much and so often upon the subject of loving one another: yet viewing the subject as just stated, the equity of his so doing, with his motives, reasons, ends and designs, appears most truly divine and noble. Here the *ought*, or necessity for the same most clearly appears. The love of God to us, and this as manifested to us, in the Person of Christ, and in all the blessings of his free, full, and complete salvation, lays us under the perpetual obligation of loving one another in Christ, and for his sake. And nothing short of what hath been declared, can by any means prove love to one another for Christ's sake, a supernatural grace: whereas this does.

I would add to this—The drawing forth of our love, from us towards each other, is as truly owing to the operation of the Holy Spirit upon us, as the drawing forth of our hearts and affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ also is. I hope the statement may appear as clear to others, as it doth to myself: if so, it will not in the least, nor by any means diminish the grace of brotherly love, or loving one another in the Lord, and for his sake, but greatly improve the glory and real excellency of the same: it may also reflect a glory on all the past verses which have been employed by our apostle, in former scriptures on this subject of loving the brethren. We do not finish the subject here: the next verse seems to me, to be the close; but there are a few hints after in this and the next chapter, yet not to the very same extent to that which we have already passed over. I conceive if all contained in the whole of this Epistle were considered, as giving an account of the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost in the minds and on the affections of those who are regenerated and born of God, and also how this most Divine and Sacred Agent is pleased to work farther on their minds by the truths of the everlasting gospel, setting them so effectually thereon as to produce the proper fruit and effect of the same in the understanding, affections, memory and conscience, and as that hereby the whole spirit, soul, and body, are brought under the almighty power and influence of the same; and that real saints are wholly and entirely passive in all this; it would save us from looking to ourselves or within ourselves for any of these fruits and evidences of grace. I rather apprehend the subject thus—That if what hath been suggested were understood by any of us, and we acknowledged that this is the right statement of the same, we should then be looking to the Holy Ghost, praying Him to produce in our minds, affections, lives and conversations, the glorious fruits and effects of our having received the Lord Jesus Christ, and his salvation into our hearts. Beloved, the true apprehension of what I here suggest, would save and protect our minds from all legality, both in our reading and expounding this Epistle: we should then find nothing in the same to embarrass our minds therein. It is a sad thing to have our minds prejudiced for, or against one and another: it is by no means good, because some have made a very sad preposterous use of signs and evidences of inherent

grace, so as to put souls on examining their meetness for heaven, and at the same time overlooking their title to heaven. What gives me right and title to Glory, goes before my meetness to enjoy it. My title is in Christ: it is being an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ gives me title; and it is the Spirit of God working in me holiness, makes me meet to be partaker next—A partaker here of communion through Christ, a partaker hereafter in communion with Christ. May the Lord Jesus Christ give us a right understanding in all things, that we may so rightly receive the word of his Truth into our minds, as by no means to corrupt his word; but may we so attain to the knowledge of that which is revealed and set before us therein, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may receive from us their equal glory and praise. Amen.

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## SERMON LXIII.

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*No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.—1 JOHN IV. 12.*

THE apostle here in pursuing his subject, concerning loving one another, and this from the knowledge and consideration of the greatness and immensity of God's love to us in Christ Jesus, suggests farther, that seeing God is invisible, we are not able to know what love there is in the heart of God towards us, but by the effects of the same. It is in his gift of Christ for us: in his bestowing Christ and all the blessings of his great salvation on us: his sending his Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, to reveal Christ in us and to us, and to take of the things of Christ and shew the same unto us, thus enthroning Him in our minds, and giving us to know Him, and the power of his resurrection, we are brought to know that love is of God—That God is love—That he hath manifested his love to us, in the sending his Son into the world, that we might live through him. Thus the free, sovereign, transcendent, inconceivable love of God, hath shone, and will for evermore continually shine forth on the whole church both in earth and heaven, in the Person of Christ; the gift of Christ: the mission and commission of Christ: his glorious mediation, obedience and sacrifice. *No man hath seen God at any time.* We only know Him by revelation. It is from the gifts and effects of his love, we are led to some faint views and apprehensions of the same. So our love to him is shewn only by the effects: if we love one another, this is the evidence thereof: it is hereby evidenced God dwelleth in us. Hereby it is proved, by our loving one another, that our love to God is sincere: yea, that it hath attained to a certain degree of strength and maturity. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* In opening my present text, I shall aim to set before you, and explain the following particulars, with a view to decipher the whole contained in the same.



1. I will take notice of this most solemn and positive declaration of the apostle, which concerns the invisibility of God. *No man hath seen God at any time.*

2. Our love to God can only be known by its effects. This is a gracious effect thereof; *our loving one another.*

3. Our loving one another is the fruit of God's dwelling in us. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.*

4. It is by this as the means, that our love to God, and to one the other, is attained to a degree of strength and maturity. These are the particulars, and in going through them, I hope, the Lord himself teaching me, to give you the full outline of all contained in the words before us. I am

1. To take notice of this most solemn and positive declaration of the apostle, which concerns the Invisibility of God: *No man hath seen God at any time.*

God is invisible: yet the whole universe is full of Him: most gloriously proclaims Him. The Heavens are full of his glory, the Earth is full of his praise. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. i. 20. Yet this is not to see God: it is only the work of his hands. And whilst his Being, Eternity, Immensity, Self-Existence, Wisdom, Power, and Goodness are displayed in his works of creation and providence; yet what he is in his Invisibility is not made known hereby. *Moses* desired to see the glory of the Lord, but received this answer to his request, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." Exod. xxxiii. 20. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, *God is a Spirit.* When the scripture treats on this subject, the Nature or Essence of God, it expresseth the same as our text doth—That God is wholly invisible, incomprehensible, and as dwelling in light, wholly inaccessible. Thus *Paul* says, "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. The same apostle offers up the following doxology to the Divine Majesty in the Person of Christ: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17. Our *John* says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John i. 18; which seems to be in part quoted in our text. *No man hath seen God at any time.* It is a quotation from his own words; which as it was an immutable truth, there could be no impropriety in the repetition of the same: it being from himself. In his own words which he here quotes from, we understand that the whole revelation which the incomprehensible Godhead, or God, hath made of the Essence, of the divine incommunicable Essence, as also of the Persons existing in it by essential union with it, is all in Christ; who is as considered Personally distinct from the Father and the Spirit, *the only begotten Son of the Father.* I here ask no questions, how is this? I would prefer having my mind receive this truth, that so it is, than make the least enquiry how it is. Nor would I for myself admit of this, that He is so styled because He is God-Man, the first begotten in the infinite

mind of all God's ways, works, and designs towards, and upon all creatures. I am speaking for myself. When Christ, as here, is said to be *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father*, I profess to believe the Son of God to be the Son of God, as distinct in the Essence-Existing, from the Father and the Spirit—That his being Essentially and Personally the Son of the living God, was the foundation of his being set up from everlasting God-Man—That his being God-Man, adds nothing to his Divine Filiation, or Sonship, in which he is of the same Essence with the Father. But it is this adds to all he is, and is the foundation of all He is as God-Man. And it is in Him as thus considered, God manifested in the flesh, all the glory of the Godhead is reflected, all the knowledge of the Persons in Godhead discovered, and it is hereby, the elect of God, saints and elect angels, have been, and are admitted into true, clear, and spiritual apprehensions of God, as suit the states in the which the Lord hath been pleased to place them, and which will in the issue perfect their felicity. It is only in the Person of Christ, God-Man, the Godhead is fully manifested. It is only in Christ as God-Man, that all the glories of the Divine Nature, and the Persons in it, are manifested; so as that there is thereby the uttermost knowledge, and communication of God's love made to the minds, both of elect angels and saints, as they are by any means capable of receiving, or that God himself can make known of Himself, as suited to their intellectual capacities, or communicate of his love and goodness unto them. If it be thus, then the true knowledge of God, in all we now know of Him, or ever shall, yea, in heaven itself, throughout the ages of eternity, is all in the Person of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. This is just what our apostle says, *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. God is the Father of lights.* Christ is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It is by Him alone, that every one born into the spiritual world, is enlightened into the true knowledge of the Holy One. He was in the bosom of the Father from everlasting. He is one in the Essence with the Father and the Spirit. He knows all contained in the whole Essence of Godhead, and in the Personal Subsistences therein. He knows the whole will of Godhead in each of the Divine Persons therein. He became God-Man, by the will of the Sacred Three: and is able to unfold their great and vast designs. So that though no man, nor angel hath seen God, as to his Essence, at any time, yet *the only begotten Son*, who is God and Man in one Christ, *he hath declared him.* Christ is the great manifester of God. A full proof that He is equal with God: if he were not, he could not manifest, and make known God to us. This he does, not by making known God in his Essence, or mode of the Personal Subsistences in the Essence, as Father, Son, and Spirit, but so as to declare it is positively so: and then to shew us how each of these have loved us, in the Person of the God-Man, with an everlasting love, and also how they have been pleased from everlasting, to express their mutual loves to us in the whole scheme of grace. *No man hath seen God at any time.* This is the doctrine of scripture: this is the doctrine of our text. If it be so, how know we Him? How know we that God is love? How is it that we know, any of us, that God hath loved us with an everlasting love? How is it we know any thing respecting the manifestation thereof unto us? These questions must be taken up, and answers be returned unto them, which will serve to confirm what is declared in the

text affirmatively, *No man hath seen God at any time*: and also serve to prove, we know nothing of God and of his love to us, but by revelation made thereof unto us: and also by its most blessed fruits and effects. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

I conceive the Essence of God, the Persons in God, the Perfections of God, wholly invisible, incomprehensible. I do not apprehend that saints and angels in glory, will ever see God in his Essence, and Persons. It is in the Person of the God-Man, who is one in union with the only begotten Son of God, that all the glory of Godhead, and of the Persons in Godhead, will for ever and for ever shine forth in a manifestative and communicative way upon the whole church. I conceive all the glory of God, in his acts of grace towards the church, in the whole of the same in election and salvation, in the consummation of the same, in the eternal perfection of the church in Christ, with all the personal communion which elect angels and saints will enjoy with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is all reflected upon these in the glorious Person of Christ, God-Man, and the good of all contained in all this, most truly and actually enjoyed in real communion with the Persons in the Holy Trinity, by means of the indissoluble union between Christ, God-Man, and the whole election of grace. So that I conceive the beatific vision will not consist in the sight of God, but in the vision of Christ—In beholding Him as He is: and *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, personally.* Now Christ is revealed in the scriptures; and in Him we have the full revelation of God: it is therefore by this revelation of God and Christ, we are enlightened by the Spirit of Christ, and brought to a true, scriptural knowledge of God in Christ. It is in the revelation of Christ, which is set before us in the sacred writings, we are led to know that God is love: in the gift of Him, we have the utmost manifestation of the same: it is hereby we only can know it; for God is not seen: we do not hear his voice immediately. It is by mediums which he hath most graciously appointed for conveying the knowledge of Himself to our minds, and the knowledge of his love to our hearts, and his consolations to us, that we have those apprehensions and enjoyments of the same, which we profess, and the scriptures give us full warrant for declaring ourselves to be the subjects of. *No man hath seen God at any time*: yet he hath shone on us in the Person of Christ. He hath made himself known to us, in and by the revelation which he has given of Himself, in Christ Jesus, by his most blessed gospel. Then this is an answer to the question, *If no man hath seen God at any time*, how is it you see and know him? It is by revelation. God hath revealed his Son in us. If it be asked, how know you, that God hath loved you with an everlasting love; and set forth to the open view of faith, all his love to you in the Son of his love, Jesus Christ? the reply is; By the everlasting gospel of his grace. The Lord's revelation of all this in the gospel, hath been brought home to our minds, by the testimony and authority of the Holy Ghost. He hath revealed to our minds, the love of God. He hath shed abroad in our hearts a real sense thereof: we have thereby a real sense and enjoyment of the same. Therefore though we have not, neither hath any man, at any time seen God; yet we know that *God is love*: this is self-evident to us, from and by the gracious effects of the same, which we have enjoyed in our own souls. This will be most fully evidenced in our next particular: which is this:

2. That as we only know the love of God to us, by its fruits and effects, so our love to Him can only be known in the same way—By the fruits and effects of the same towards Him, and towards His—*By loving one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* If comes in here; yet not by way of doubting, but by way of confirmation. As surely as ye love one another, so surely does God love you. Not as if this was either the cause of God's love, or the means of the continuation of it. No; this never entered into any of their minds: neither was loving one another a mere natural love. It will not therefore be amiss, whilst so much hath already been said, to express the substance of this subject afresh. If we love one another, then the fruits and effects of God's love to us, are manifested in us, and are manifested by us. It is this is the present subject which is here to be pursued by us.

God hath loved us. He is all love to us. He hath manifested the same to us—In the gift of his Son—In the mission of his Son—In the propitiation of his Son. All which we have the certain knowledge, persuasion, experience and enjoyment of in our souls. We never saw God. We never heard the voice of God: yet we have been favoured, some of us, with a sight of Christ in the flesh: some of us have not: yet all of us have been blessed, and refreshed with an inward apprehension of this truth, that *love is of God*, and that *God is love*. All which hath been most gloriously manifested in the Person, gift, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have felt the efficacy of this love in our hearts. We have felt the warmth of the same in our affections. We have been divinely refreshed and warmed therewith. We cannot but stand forth as the Lord's witnesses to declare, we are so under the full persuasion that God is love, that He hath loved us in Christ, with an everlasting love, that he sent his Son into the world on our account, and that to be a propitiation for our sins—that all such who have the same spiritual apprehensions of this incomprehensible mystery of grace, we cannot but love. We love their persons: we love them as the Lord's: we love them in the Lord: we love them for the Lord's sake: we love them very particularly on account of their good conversation in Christ Jesus. Whilst we in conversing one with another, find the same truths of the everlasting gospel refresh us; and that in and by the same, it is clear the Holy Ghost hath revealed to our minds the same inward, spiritual views, and created the same enjoyments, and led into the same communion with the Father's love to us, in the Person of Christ; we have found ourselves, of one heart and soul with these, we have love one to another. So that hereby we have loved, and still are continued to love one another, and also in loving one another.

Now to improve upon this: *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* True it is, all I have at this time to do with, in this present particular of the text, is the clause of it, *If we love one another*; which is brought in to evidence this truth—That like as God's love to us, can only be made known to us, by its effects—For though the grand original of it be revealed, which flows from and is founded on the good pleasure of God's will, yet it is by the gracious effects which proceed from the same, we have our minds most divinely impressed therewith—so it is, as we find persons to whom we open our minds, and converse with, on the subjects of everlasting love, the Person, glories, royalties, and Personal excel-

lencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of his heart, his finished salvation, and what he is to us, and how he delighteth in us, and how he will so do to all eternity; it is as these discover being in their own mind and views one with ourselves in these divine and glorious subjects, that we are one with them: united in the same mind one towards each other according to Christ Jesus. It is because the generality of those who profess Christ, who are under an outward profession of His most holy Name, are so little united in heart and soul: it is not, simply considered, that they do not love one another for Christ's sake; but it is, they do not love one another in the knowledge and enjoyment of the same truths, neither have they communion with God in the true knowledge of God, the same way. Let this be observed: then the truth contained in the observation, will preserve us from many entanglements; such as these: we are no farther in heart and soul one in spiritual things, than as we have similar views and apprehensions of spiritual truths: in the present day in which we live, there is not an unity of sentiment amongst the godly themselves, even about those things which concern their everlasting peace. Some of us conceive that the revelation of Christ in the gospel, is an all-sufficient foundation for our believing in Him for everlasting life—That the true apprehension of Him, as therein revealed, is life everlasting—That true faith in Him carries its own evidence with it. And that we want no other ground and support for it, but the testimony of God given in it, concerning his Son. Others think this is not all which is necessary: they conceive there must be a work grace previously perceived in the soul, and evidences and signs of the same, or there can be no sufficient ground for them to believe they are believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and may look on themselves as saved by Him. Now it is impossible where such differing apprehensions are entertained in the mind, there can be a cordiality of affection, and union of spirit: yet both may be godly. So with respect to the life of faith and sense. The child of God who lives by the faith of the Son of God, can never be of one heart and soul with him, be he ever so excellent, who is living in the views of his own graces, and drawing all his confidence and hope in God, from what he finds and feels in himself. So as it respects the great and essential truths of the everlasting gospel; such as find and experience their everlasting life contained in them, and the same maintained and strengthened in them by these, can never love such and such, whilst they may acknowledge them to be the Lord's people, who think and speak lightly of eternal Truth, and feed wholly on what they find and experience within themselves, which they style the work of God within them. I think it might herefrom appear, that the Lord's people love each other as the Lord's people: yet they do not particularly love each other, but as they are one in the same faith. There is one common love to all the holy brotherhood. There is a singularly special love, which is more personally expressed by one to another, and this is discovered in the following way—when saints have their mutual interviews with each other, to speak of the love of their heavenly Father in Christ Jesus towards them, as this is a means of warming each other's hearts, and of their expressing their views, thoughts, and the knowledge of Christ, with the influences and operations of the Holy Spirit within, and upon them, so as the relation of these subjects is similar to what hath been transacted in the minds of the Lord's people present; then in agreement with this it is, their hearts are knit together, and there

is that personal love and affection to each other in Christ, and for Christ, which cannot possibly subsist without this. There is therefore this to be delivered, and abided by as an immutable truth—we are to love all the Lord's with spiritual and unfeigned love: and we cannot but love some of the Lord's people, with an especial love. Let this be maintained, and abided by: it is sufficient to keep up harmony and love throughout the whole family of God.

The gospel received into the mind, is the mean whereby Christ is formed in the heart. It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Our whole salvation is in the Person, and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel gives us full warrant for believing, and full security for our personal salvation. Now whatsoever it be which gives any of us peace of conscience, by anything opposite unto, or different from the gospel, in and by which Christ is set forth, and proclaimed, to be a free and perfect Saviour, it is not the gospel. The gospel of itself contains sufficient satisfaction to a guilty mind: this is received into it, when the gospel is believed: it is by this means we enjoy the peace of God, having our guilt removed, by believing God made Christ sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him: yet amongst such as profess the gospel, some there are, who have and desire to have a satisfaction that they are the saved of the Lord, by having an assurance of this in a way the gospel knows nothing of: perhaps it may be, in an enthusiastic satisfaction, formed upon a persuasion, or appropriation, more than or besides what the gospel, properly understood, will warrant. Well then, should persons under a profession of the Truth, have such different ideas of the same, there cannot any personal love subsist between them. Our love to God can only be known by its effects: as we can only know his love to us by the gracious effects of the same. *No man hath seen God at any time*: Yet if we have had his love shine forth on us, in the Person, gift, and salvation of Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father hath shone upon us, and within us in Him, and shed abroad a sense of his love in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given us, then we cannot but make a discovery of this by loving him in return for his so loving us. And as he is not visible, but by his called people, we love them for his sake. *If we love one another*, this is the effect of God's loving us, and it is hereby we manifest it; so as openly to give proof and evidence hereof. I proceed

3. To observe, that our loving one another, is the fruit of God's loving us, and dwelling in us. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.*

It is one most blessed evidence of the love of saints one to another, when they love to pour out their hearts one to another, in communicating their accounts of the views they have been favoured with in their real, personal, and immediate communion with God, of the love of his heart towards them. In opening the secrets of God, as they have been discovered unto them by the Divine Spirit, and what they have been admitted into apprehensions of, concerning eternal things, at such peculiar seasons and consecrated moments for fellowship, with the Divine Majesty; this is a most gracious expression of the Divine favour: for God to dwell in us, and thereby to possess the mind with the knowledge and enjoyment of his love, so as for the understanding, the will, the memory, the affections to be deeply swallowed up in the true knowledge and appre-

hension thereof, this is most truly heavenly and divine. As this gives the best inward sense and apprehension of the love of God, which can be formed in the renewed and spiritual mind; so it is by the impressions made on it by the Spirit of the Lord, that the believer is enabled to walk before the Lord, under a due sense and influence of the same: it is hereby and herefrom, we are most divinely constrained to love one another. Most assuredly we can only be impressed with the love of God to us, in proportion to our knowledge of it: we only receive the knowledge of it by the effects thereof: hence I am frequently led to say, all we know of the love of God at present, is only by the fruits and effects of the same. Yea, and I sometimes think, and it may be, express myself on this subject, so as to say, all we shall ever know of it, and enjoy even in the immediate presence of God in glory, is but the fruits and effects of everlasting love: the fountain and spring of it, can never be fully opened and made known: it being as infinite and incomprehensible as Godhead. The effects of the same contain everlasting life, felicity, and blessedness: the minds of saints on earth are, and will be in heaven, perpetually satisfied and satiated therewith: so that what the apostle says, here comes in with all its greatness and glory; *None, neither men, or angels, No man hath seen God at any time.* Therefore if any know the love of God, it can only be by revelation: and when it is by that revelation it hath pleased the Lord to make known of himself, by the glorious gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, we are led to know that God is love, even then this is most chiefly set before us, in its glorious fruits and effects. It is from the streams we get to the fountain: and that is inexorable. All which ever was said of it, or that can be said of it, is, *God is love.* We apprehending the truth of this, in the light, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, *love one another.* *If we love one another,* or, inasmuch, or, forasmuch as *we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is made perfect, or is perfected in us:* that is, it is hereby it fully appears that *God dwelleth in us.* It may be asked how? most assuredly by his love so possessing their minds, as that hereby they loved one another for his sake, and greatly delighted in conversing together upon the subject of everlasting love: by holding spiritual communion with each other, and their speaking their views of the outgoings of God's love towards them in Christ from everlasting: and in all the gifts and manifestations of the same, as it had been made known by the word, and Spirit of God to their minds. The expression, *God dwelleth in us,* is great. We must examine it, and also what is to be understood by it: as also in what way and by what means there can be communion between God and us carried on mentally within us; for most assuredly it must be intuitively, and, as I conceive, we must be more passive than active here. It has at our entrance on this Epistle been expressly declared that this sacred part of apostolic writing concerns the communion saints have with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit: as also here and there in it, some hints are given concerning that distinct and Personal fellowship which the Father, the Son, and the Spirit hold in the minds of the elect. By which their distinct Personalities are kept up, as also their distinct and mutual loves to the elect are so manifested to their minds, as that they cannot but acknowledge the same, to the equal honor and glory of the co-equal and co-essential Three in the incomprehensible Essence. It is not God Essentially who is here spoken of, but God in the Father. He

it is, who expressed his incomprehensible love, in so loving us in Christ, as to give us being in Him: and in so loving us, as to bestow Him on us, out of the same good will, and everlasting love wherewith he loved us. And He dwelleth in us, in an ineffable way and manner as not to be comprehended by us: and he possesses our spiritual, supernatural faculties, as that they are at certain seasons, filled with a knowledge of his love to us, so that we are swallowed up thereby, and that to an holy excess and inebriation. This is as I conceive, God the Father's dwelling in us: and he supplies us with such knowledge and views of his love, as fill our understandings with right apprehensions of it—Our hearts with an unspeakable enjoyment of it—Our wills with the most perfect satisfaction and acquiescence in the same; and our affections with the most profound joy flowing therefrom. All this I conceive we are wholly passive in. It is not so much an outgoing of our hearts towards the Lord, as the outgoings of the Lord's heart towards us: and is of the same kind, though not to the same degree, with the outgoings of the heart and love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to his saints in heaven.

I would here again recite the whole of my text, as I think it will confirm these ideas, and strengthen them. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* As none is able to know what love is in the heart of God, but by the effects of that love, so it is by the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, dwelling in us, and engaging the whole of our spiritual minds with such intellectual intuitive conceptions of the love of God, that he keeps his court in our souls, and gives us real communion with himself in our minds, so as to admit us to have that knowledge of the same, which cannot be transmitted to our minds any other way. All real saints will confess that there are seasons in their cases and experiences, in which they are sometimes more immediately swallowed up in the contemplations of the Father's love to their persons in Christ, and with the revealed acts and particular blessings thereof. At other times they are particularly swallowed up in contemplations on the Person of Christ, His love and salvation, and their personal union unto Him, and their interest in Him: this is what I call, and mean when I speak of distinctive communion with the Son. There are seasons in which the minds of saints are swallowed up in divine acts of worship to the Holy Spirit, and are spiritually engaged in true scriptural apprehensions of his distinctive love to them. And are solemnly impressed with his grace towards them, in that he hath quickened their souls with spiritual and eternal life, and hath led them into the true knowledge of the love of the Father and the Son; which he is pleased at certain seasons to lead them into, by such particular views of, as give them most effectually to apprehend, all their spiritual life, in all its fruits and effects, depends wholly and entirely on Himself, as the life and source thereof. So that he hereby possesses their whole minds with the same, and holds communion with them herein. And this I call distinct communion with the Holy Ghost, and that as personally and apprehensively distinct from what we have with the Father and the Son. It is not that we can possibly have communion with the Father, and not at the same time have communion with the Son, and with the Spirit: yet we have more particular and special communion with the Father at one time, with the Son at another, with the Spirit at



another, and that in holy intercourse. And by this means it is, their Personal distinction in Godhead, and their distinct acts and offices are kept up in our souls, and we are led to give them equal honor, and co-equal praise for their love to us, for their interest in us, and for their everlasting good will towards us : which leads me

4. To observe, it is by this means, that our love to God, and to one another, is promoted, and attains to a degree of strength and maturity. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

It is by the revelation, and manifestation of God's love to us, we are brought to know that God is love. It is from hence we are brought to give outward evidence of this, by loving one another, because God hath loved us : and God dwelling in us, and filling our minds with the knowledge of his love, and our hearts with the enjoyments of the same, we cannot but exercise our sense and gratitude of the same, in loving where the Lord loves—In loving those whom the Lord loves—In loving them out of and from the sense we have of God's love to us in Christ : and it hereby appears and is realized that God dwelleth in us, and that his love hath its true and proper effect within us. It comes to maturity : its strength and perfection, the influence it hath within us and upon us, herein and hereby shine forth. It is a most glorious perfection of the scriptures, never to speak of the effects without ascertaining the causes which produce them. It is our defect—perhaps none of the greatest ministers of Christ, but are all more or less defective here ; not to state with precision, how such and such effects of grace are produced in our souls : for they must be first produced in our minds, before they can be exercised by us. We all say, they cannot be existent in us without the Spirit : this is an immutable truth ; yet this is not saying, how and by what means He produceth them. Most assuredly it must be, as He is pleased to impress our minds, inwardly and effectually with such particular conceptions of God's love to us in Christ, and mercy to us in Him, and with what He is to us in Him, as naturally and necessarily produce such and such apprehensions in our minds, which produce such and such effects, or graces, as shew themselves and break forth into certain and particular acts and exercises. It is by the manifestations of the love of God to us, our love to Him is promoted and drawn forth : and it cannot but be so, even in the state of glory. We shall there have the whole fulness of God break forth towards us : by which our love to God will be maintained perpetually in its most complete vigour, and perpetual exercise. It is not because we shall then be in a state, in the which we cannot doubt of God's love to us, that we shall be uninterruptedly happy ; but it will be, because we shall then be where God is continually feeding and feasting the minds of his saints with the constant manifestations of his love to them, by shining continually with all the grace contained in his love, upon them in Christ ; and it is this will keep up the mind and love of saints to God, in perpetual act and exercise. It is well for us to look at God's love ; and at God's being all love, and nothing but love to us ; and at his expressing the whole of it to us, in the Son of his love, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the object and centre of the Father's everlasting love. It all begins in Him. The whole fulness of it is in Him. It is in Him we are. It is in Him all God's love is reflected on us. It is in Him God sets it before us, and that in all its

glory. Our misery is to have any thoughts and meditations of it out of Christ. May it be given unto us to behold the revelation God hath made of the greatness and immensity of his love to us, in his Son. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* The Lord give us full proof of this. Amen.

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## SERMON LXIV.

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*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*—1 JOHN IV. 13.

To be the objects and subjects of the Father's everlasting love, to have true and scriptural apprehensions of the manifestation of this in Christ, and to be led into the knowledge of all this by the Eternal Spirit, who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God; in this it is, everlasting life, and all the blessings, the graces and comforts of it must consist. As we know God by the enjoyments we have of his love, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and as God dwelleth in us, and fills our spiritual faculties with the knowledge and enjoyment of the same; this is one of the open fruits and effects which it produceth in us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, and also in all the real called of God—*We love one another.* And the love of God having its abidance in our hearts, the love of one another as fellow-saints, is perfected and completed in us, and it waxeth stronger and stronger in our minds one towards each other. It is hereby we know that we dwell in God, and he dwells in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. Our heavenly Father hath most freely bestowed upon us, the gifts and graces of his Spirit. We are influenced by the Holy Ghost, both as public and private christians. If you look at us, as apostles and preachers of the word, this is precisely so: we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, in his gifts and graces, and it is by Him we are qualified to preach the gospel unto you. It is by the same Spirit dwelling in you, that ye know and enjoy the love of God, and have communion with him. I conceive my text will bear this two-fold interpretation. It appears the apostle is here resuming his former subject, with which he began this chapter, which was how the saints were to know the Spirit of God, in the preachers then amongst them: this he having freely and fully declared, he dropped at the close of the 6th verse. Then he assumed a fresh subject, exhorting to the exercise of love to God, by expressing the same to one another as the children of God: to promote which, he had set before those to whom he wrote, the exceeding greatness of the love of God in God himself, and as manifested in Christ towards us. This had not only been displayed in the Person, and gift, and salvation of Christ, but it was inwardly in us,

as God dwelleth in us; so as to possess our minds with the fullest evidence and enjoyment of the same in our hearts. He then from hence takes up this present subject which he had been before upon, that we know that we dwell in Him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit: who having led us, that is the apostles into all Truth, we therefore declare unto you, and set before you, all included and contained in the Person, incarnation, and Messiahship of Messiah, the Son of God. The words which follow these, seem to me as confirmations of this.

The clearness and perspicuity with which every subject is treated in the divine volume, is no small part of the excellency thereof. The apostle is here speaking of the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, bestowed on him and others, as full evidences of the indwelling of God in them. To open this passage, so as to lose no part of it, and at the same time to give a two-fold interpretation of the same, yet such as may by no means clash, but so agree as to give no ground for complaint, I will aim to set it forth in the following particulars.

1. What the apostle here declares in his own name and that of others: it respects what he and they knew, concerning the indwelling of God in them; *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us.* They were well acquainted and well persuaded of this truth, which had been thus expressed: *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

2. How he, and those of whom the apostle here speaks, knew that they dwelt in God, and God in them: it was by his Spirit which was in them. This is for the substance of it, what he had before said in chapter iii. v. 24, in these words, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." As these two particulars are to contain the whole of what I mean to set before you, so I would premise, that I shall enlarge on these as may appear to me to be convenient and necessary, and as the Lord may most graciously be pleased to influence and assist. I am

1. To open and declare what the apostle here expresses in his own name, and that of others. It respects himself: and also, as I confess I for my own part conceive, the rest of the apostles are to be included: neither do I mean to leave out believers in Christ; as most certain it is, it is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and by his taking of the things of Christ, and shewing the same unto them, and by his shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts, he gives them most sure evidence and testimony of their personal interest in the Father's everlasting favour, and of their union to, and interest in Christ. So that this part of the Holy Spirit's work and office is as truly one and the same, in the least and weakest, as it is in the strongest saint; yea—in the apostles themselves. Apostolical gifts and graces, as also preaching gifts and graces are quite different and distinct from those acts of the Holy Ghost within us and upon us, whereby we are born from above, and made visibly and evidently the children of God, and partakers of Christ. Yet as the apostle here speaks of himself and his fellow-apostles, as appears from the following verse, in the which he saith, *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world:* I think some reference in our present text, may well be considered as

being had to his and their having the knowledge of God, and of his indwelling in them, by the gifts and graces of his Spirit which he had given them. By whom they were kept in the Truth and alive unto it; on account of the which our apostle had said at the 6th verse of this chapter, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Now if we follow the apostle from thence down to the scripture where we now are, we shall find it all comprehended in his excitement to the saints to love one another—In declaring that love is of God, and that God is love—In setting forth the manifestation of the same in the Person and mission of Christ—In bringing the weight and importance of all contained in all this upon their minds: then saying, *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us:* immediately he utters the words before us, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* The words, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us,* are not an inference drawn from the former: they begin a new subject; or rather a fresh branch of the subject; and accordingly seem very fairly to belong to the speaker, and others, as such who were preachers of the true and everlasting gospel. Therefore I know not where to arrange them better, and more suitably than with the 6th verse. Yet lest it should hereby be supposed, I want to enervate the force and efficacy of them, as though I would wholly exclude their having an influence and efficacy upon saints; yea, as if they might not be considered as belonging to all the saints, I will therefore consider them so, as they may appear in their uttermost extent. *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* The apostle had used the word *us* before in the context, thereby including all the saints: he had spoken of this inexpressible act of grace, God's dwelling in his people, and possessing their minds with his love—That it was from hence they were sweetly constrained to love one another: and now he says, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

The subject is God's dwelling in us, and our dwelling in Him: the truth and reality of this is self-evident unto us: the evidence of this is, God hath given *us* of his Spirit. The union of our persons to the Person of Christ, God-Man, is founded on our eternal election in Christ. He is the only medium of our union unto God: on this all our communion with God, and God's communion with us is founded. The work of Christ as our Saviour is founded hereupon: so are the acts and operations of the Holy Spirit within us and upon us also. The Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father dwelleth in us: this is as hath been already declared, by his possessing our renewed minds, and spiritual faculties, with such apprehensions of his love to us: by this means we have fellowship with Him, in the knowledge, sense and apprehension he admits us to have and enjoy in our own souls, of his love to us—The mystery of God's love to us in Christ; so is the communion He is pleased to hold with us in Him; nor are all saints alike favoured with the same, as it respects the manifestation and evident proofs thereof. We are generally most taken, and we speak most of our communion with God, yet it is God's communion with us, is one of the great mysteries of grace, and which must take place, before our communion can appear and be by any means

seen and perceived even by ourselves. As communion between God and us, is wholly of grace, it being wholly supernatural and divine, so I conclude there most certainly is much real communion between God and his saints, carried on, which they themselves do not perceive. None of it can be without the Spirit, and he is at times pleased to make the same most clear and evident to the mind which is the subject hereof. The apostle is here speaking of this: as also how it is evidenced. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him.* Our Lord speaketh much on this subject in the 6th chapter of the gospel of *John*; and also in the 17th chapter of the same: and of the ultimate glory-union and communion the whole church will be admitted to the knowledge and enjoyment of, in glory everlasting. His words are these; "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Now Christ is the sole foundation of union to God. It is in Him, the Father is pleased to dwell in us, and hold Personal fellowship with us: and it is by the Holy Spirit we are led into the knowledge of the same. It is by the Holy Spirit's enlightening our minds, and as he takes of the things of Christ, and makes the same known unto us, we are led into the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. It is from the Holy Ghost, as co-equal with the Father and the Son in the mysteries of grace, transacted among the glorious Trinity from everlasting. He, from the Father, through the Son, as Mediator, descends on the persons of the elect, in consequence of their union, and in the virtue of his righteousness, and puts forth in them the virtue of influential union; and thus the Holy Spirit is pleased to make manifest that we are the Lord's: which having done, he leads us into a knowledge of the Lord, and his love to us, in his beloved Son. And it is from hence all our spiritual life, motiou, and outgoings after the Lord, and our inward and actual communion with God proceed. It is from a new light imparted to our souls, from the Holy Spirit, that we know Christ to be, that which the Scriptures declare Him to be; and apprehend all fulness, freeness, and fitness in Him: so as that He is in every sense, a Saviour suited to the whole of what we are. And hereby we are led to centre in Him, and the Father also in Him; all which is through the Spirit. I conceive what I have expressed, is of a piece with what the apostle says in the words before us, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* I would here observe, I have carried the *him*, and explained it, as belonging to the Father; whereas it is most commonly for the Scripture to refer this to Christ. And I must confess it is only because I cannot in the past verse refer what is there said, but to the Divine Father, and therefore I have considered Him as here also to be the immediate Person spoken of. Yet it looks to me, it may be considered either way; and both the Father and Son be included, as they seem to be in this scripture; "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that

he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." chap. iii. 23, 24.

As the apostle's words are a declaration of what he, and other saints knew of the indwelling of God in them, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us*, may also be applicable to him and the rest of the apostles, I will now in this place consider; as I am very inclinable to consider; he speaks here in relation to his, and their testimony concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. I have given you an hint of this before: I dropt it because you should have full evidence, I did not want the church of Christ to be any real loser by such an explanation, as if she was thereby excluded of the benefit of the Holy Spirit's teaching, or could be brought to know and enjoy the Father's love in actual communion without the Spirit. I should ever like in all my writings, sermons, prayers, and conversations concerning spiritual and eternal things, to preserve the order, the acts, and operations of the Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, in and throughout the whole of their economy of grace, as recorded in the revelation given of the same in the word of the gospel. I do not mean I can do this completely and correctly, according to the written rule, the holy and immutable word of God. But when, and wheresoever I do not, it only proves that I am not then influenced and for that time under the immediate teaching of the Spirit of God. I am not here speaking of knowing the mystery contained in the scriptural doctrine of the incomprehensible Trinity, I am speaking concerning knowing only the doctrine of the same, and that as stated in the word, and as it is most clearly evidenced in the glorious system of revealed grace, as displayed in election, in salvation, in regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and eternal glorification. Surely it cannot but be most truly desirable, to know the Personal and distinct acts of each of the co-equal and co-eternal Persons in Godhead, as it hath pleased them to express themselves in Christ, God-Man, in, upon and towards the Elect. It cannot be a small attainment, to arrive to this: neither can it be that, we shall be able to bear and maintain this in its true order, even if once favoured with it, but as the Holy Ghost is pleased Himself so to enable us. I conceive the words of my text, which are these, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*, concern a former subject, which had been treated of before, regarding false prophets, heretics, and antichrists, who were in *John's* day. He began his subject in giving an account of them in the 2nd chapter of this Epistle: he expressly said what they were in the 22nd, and 23rd verses of that chapter: the first by way of question: the second by way of answer—"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also:" then in the beginning of this present chapter, he gives cautions and forewarns the church against antichristian teachers; and expressly declares one of their pernicious tenets was, the denial of the Messiah's being come in the flesh. He shews this was giving the lie to the Spirit of Christ: it was also contrary to their witness of Him. And as I conceive, the apostle here in the words before us, linking them with the 6th verse in the present chapter, says of himself, and the apostles; *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*. It is

a proof and an immutable evidence to us, that we know the true Christ, that we are his true witnesses, and have the right apprehensions of the Father's everlasting love to the whole election of grace. Our reason for this is, *because he hath given us of his Spirit.* Now let us carry all this back to what the apostle says to the saints in the age in the which he lived: he said to them, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

Now as these saints had received an Uction from the Holy One, and knew all things, so the apostles from the same Uction had the true knowledge of the Father and the Son. Hence they wavered not in their doctrine, nor in what they declared as the most certain and infallible effects which would be produced by it; *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* It was the Holy Spirit who possessed the minds of the apostles. It was He who gave them the true knowledge of the Father's love: and of the Person of Christ, and his salvation. It was the Holy Spirit who kept them in the true knowledge and profession of the same. All the communion they had with the Father and the Son, was through the Spirit: so that they might well lay claim to this, as in a very singular manner belonging to them, though not to the exclusion of other saints, who might in other respects, be far inferior unto them, *Hereby know we that we are in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* And hereby it is, and under his teaching, and agreeable with the testimony given of the Lord and Saviour in the scriptures of truth, and of the Father's everlasting love in Him to his whole universal church, we preach the same. It is from hence we affirm to you, that we are of God—That he that knoweth God heareth us—That he that is not of God heareth not us—That hereby the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error are easily distinguishable. How far I have in what hath been declared, given you such a general insight into the text, as it may respect both the saints of God and in a particular manner be peculiarly suited unto the apostles of Christ, and be expressive and declarative of their being qualified for preaching Christ, and undermining all the false prophets, teachers, and antichrists in the then present day, I shall leave with you to judge. I for myself, confess my judgment sways me thus—To apprehend the apostles were well acquainted with, and well persuaded of it, that God dwelt in them by his love; that they also knew He had revealed his Son in them: that they were called to preach Him: that they did this most most truly and exactly, according to that which from the beginning of his being made known unto them, they had heard of him, and seen of him; and they had had fellowship with him, and thereby had communicated from him to their minds, what they had set forth in their ministrations of the knowledge of Him to others. All which was quite different, essentially and circumstantially so, from what the antichrists and false prophets, and erroneous teachers in that day had. The whole of this was sufficient evidence of the truth of the apostle's assertion; *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he*

*in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*: which, whether we say is to be understood of the Father, or the Son, comes all to one, He being one and the same Spirit, who is not the spirit of antichrist, but perfectly opposite to him; and also in his ministry. He testifying in and by the ministry of his servants that Christ, the Messiah, was already come, which the devil in his antichrists opposed and confronted. Now as I have, so far as my slender gift would allow me, shewn you what may be conceived to be designed in the apostle's declaration, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*, I would proceed to our next particular, and in going through it, enlarge freely as the Lord may be pleased to give in of himself unto the mind; for I confess I do think in preaching there is nothing like it. I do not mean the text should ever be lost sight of; or any thing brought in which is not altogether congenial and connected with it: but I mean any ideas which may arise spontaneously in the mind, whilst the discourse is delivering, so far as they may serve to elucidate and improve the subject, these I would not have suppressed. We are now,

2. To shew how the apostle, and those of whom the apostle is here speaking, knew that they dwelt in God, and God dwelt in them: it was by his *Spirit which was in them*. *Hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, and we in him, or, Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*.

In going on with this, there must be a two-fold distinction observed. *First*, God's dwelling in us: *Second*, our dwelling in God. The knowledge of all which in us, and to our minds is by the Spirit's teaching: it was hereby the holy apostles themselves knew: this *John* himself, and in their names also, and also in the name of all saints declares, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*. It was by the indwelling and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the apostles were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—That He was truly and Personally the Son of the living God—The very Christ—The true Messiah. Hence *Peter* as their mouth, expressed himself thus to our Lord himself,—“We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John vi. 69. And an individual woman believer said to our Lord, who had said unto her—“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?—She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” John xi. 25—27. It was by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost the apostles knew, that they dwelt in God, and that God dwelt in them: so likewise the knowledge of the same truths by us, and the true enjoyment of these important, sublime, spiritual and eternal realities in us, are from the Spirit of the living God. The Father's love to the whole election of grace is fully expressed, and shines forth in all its glory in Christ. This is reflected upon us, as the Sun of Righteousness shines forth upon us. It is by the Holy Spirit we have in our own renewed minds, spiritual perceptions of the same. And by the Holy Spirit's revelation of the Father's love, and Son's salvation, we not only have the true knowledge of the Father's love to us, and Christ's also, but it is hereby we have the Father dwelling in us, and Christ also. It is hereby God dwelleth in us, and we have such apprehensions of Him, and his love, as



it is wholly out of our power at any time to express. And it is by the same medium, the Holy Spirit's revealing Christ unto us, and revealing Christ in us, that Christ dwelleth in us. It is also by the secret inspiration of the Holy Ghost we know the indwelling of the Father and the Son in us, and our own personal communion with the Father and the Son. So that the words of my text will most certainly comprehend in its utmost extent and latitude, the apostles and saints, in this view of them. And we as saints, may in our measure say with them, *Hereby we know, or, Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* Our communion with the Father and the Son, is entirely by the Holy Spirit. This fellowship with them, is the very perfection of spiritual life. It consists in some supernatural light let in upon our renewed minds, by the which we take in such perceptions of the Father's love, and Christ's also, as we cannot attain by spiritual reflection and meditation. It is so intuitively, and so immediately with the Person of the Father, in the Person of Christ our glorious Head and Mediator, and this by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit. So that in communion with the Father and the Son, and through their indwelling in saints, real proof is given of the same by the Spirit.

When it is here said, *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*; may it not be asked, How is this? As also what are we to apprehend of these words which are very similar with them, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* In reply, The Person of the Holy Ghost, when he is sent from heaven, and comes from the Father and the Son, it is as the Comforter, by office, from the Father and the Mediator, the Father and Christ, who thus send him. The Spirit's mission is not as the Spirit of God: that is, it is not abstractedly *God the Spirit.* For the Holy Ghost could not be sent, or come from the Father thus, because as an infinite Person, He doth, together with the Father and the Son, fill all places at once. And therefore as the Spirit is God, it must not be said He goes from one place to another. But it is as a Comforter he doth so: for instance, the Spirit as God fills all the world, and this because He is God Essentially with the Father and the Son, in the Self-Existing Essence; yet he does not fill all the world as a Comforter. He is not given to us as God, or as the Third Person in the Godhead, he is given to us, in his Person as the Comforter. He is given to us, not in his Essence, but in his office, as the immediate cause of our obtaining the graces of the Spirit. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." 1 John iii. 24. Here is his Person, in the office of the Comforter: so in the word before us, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* It is by God's bestowment of the Holy Spirit Himself, that we know that we dwell in him, and he in us: so says *Mr. Joseph Hussey* in his book entitled, "The glory of Christ unveiled" &c.: and it seems to me to cast light upon the whole subject. The Divine and glorious Trinity dwell Personally in the saints, yet not in their Essence: it is agreeable to their relation to the elect, to their union to the persons of the elect, and in agreement with their love, and acts of grace in their vast and infinite mind from everlasting to everlasting towards them. If this be rightly apprehended, I think it will shed an ef-

fusion of light upon the whole of this Epistle, and throughout every part of it : and we should find much if not the whole mystery of grace, abstracted from the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Person of Christ, God-Man, contained therein. The apostles themselves were well and fully persuaded they had the true knowledge of Christ, and that they preached the true Christ of God, and this assurance was confirmed in them, by the Spirit which God had given them : who filled them with great boldness in the faith : who strengthened them with all might in the inner man : who fortified their minds against all sorts and kind of sufferings which could possibly befall them ; and that to so great a degree, that one of them says, " For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. viii. 18. Yet he himself was not insensible to what he was exposed unto, in the cause, and for his bearing his testimony to the glorious and blessed gospel of his Lord and Saviour : so that he elsewhere says, " I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death : for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Cor. iv. 9.

It would be well ever to remember, the gospel is a revelation of all the Persons in the incomprehensible Essence, with their will, thoughts, purposes, designs and ends in Christ, towards the whole election of grace : and no part of it can be rightly understood by any of us, but by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. There may be a good deal of general knowledge of it acquired by us, as it concerns the letter of it : but we can never be led into the life-giving meaning of it, but by the Spirit of the Holy Ones : and this is most expressly asserted in it—No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost ; neither can any of us be admitted into the life-giving sense and knowledge of the mysteries of grace, but by the Holy Spirit. He must dwell in us as the Holy Inspirer, as the Spirit of life, light, and truth, and He must be our most gracious Enlightener, Teacher, and Guide, or we cannot be made wise unto salvation. I conceive, saints, as such, are more in danger of leaning to their own understandings, in what concerns Divine Truth than is easily apprehended. We who are preachers of the word, should never venture on our work without the Spirit : neither should we ever dare to pronounce such and such as the meaning of the Holy Ghost, unless we are most truly clear in the same : and as there is no way of being clear in this, but by comparing scripture with scripture, so even then, it most highly concerns us to be looking up to the Holy Ghost for his own light and instruction on it. If it be given unto us to say, in our measure, and for our stature in Christ, as the apostle doth in the words of our text, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit* ; yet this does not make us independent of the Holy Ghost, nor of his continual teachings either : so far from it, we are hereby the more sensibly affected with the constant need of the same. It is here, as it is with respect to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If a saint be arrived to all riches of the full assurance of the understanding of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, it does not put a stop to any further acts of faith. No ; so far from it, that it only makes way for more : so that the acts of the spiritual mind, are the more increased and exercised. It is quite like unto this, as it regards our being under the light and teachings of the Holy Spirit : the more he is pleased

to enlighten our minds into the knowledge of God, and Christ, and into clear spiritual perceptions of being admitted into real and actual communion with them, and of their having and holding communion with us, the more sensibly affected we are with the gracious teachings of the Spirit, and that we shall ever need the same. Nay, I think it must be by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us, in the state of glory, we shall have and enjoy communion with God and Christ, even in heaven, and for ever. I have somewhere in *Dr. Goodwin's* works found him saying to this effect—that whilst the Holy Ghost works all in our souls, by the word, as also with it; yet he will not work with a false application of it: by which he means, if we bring any scripture to confirm at any time a doctrine we advance, and which is true in itself, yet if what we quote from the word to prove it, does not immediately concern it, the Spirit will not set his own seal to it; because it does not contain his mind and will in that particular. He says, preachers and hearers may be pleased, and profess to be profited, yet the Spirit is not in the whole of it: should the remark appear to be just, then it should lead all of us, both preachers and hearers, to be very careful and clear in our quotations of the sacred Scriptures, that they are quite equal and well suited to the doctrine they are brought either to confirm or defend. May the Lord give us the truth, knowledge, and experience of all contained in our text. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* This was the great and grand promise of Christ, to the apostles, and his whole church: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John xiv. 16, 17. May the Lord give his blessing, and convey the same to you by it, so far as agreeable to his will. Amen.

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## S E R M O N L X V.

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*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.—1 JOHN IV. 14.*

THE gospel was contained in the first declaration of grace, made known immediately to *Adam* upon the fall, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* See Gen. iii. 15—In that promise to *Abraham*, that *in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed.* See Gen. xii. 3. It was set before the whole people of *Israel*, typically, in the whole system of sacrifices and ordinances: as also in the *Psalms* and in the *Prophets*. It is now set before us historically and doctrinally in the New Testament; in the account which is therein given us concerning the incarnation, birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and

glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ; in the account which it also gives us of the true and glorious design of all this, which is most fully expressed in the exceeding great and precious promises of the same, which are all yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus. The apostles were chosen witnesses of God, to see and bear witness to what none before them, or after them could do. They lived when the eternal acts in God, concerning Christ, the gift and manifestation of Christ, and the work and office of Christ, were expressed as they never were before, or can be again to the close of time. The love of God in Christ, with a revelation of Him as the alone Saviour, broke forth immediately upon the fall: it was continued in the costly sacrifices appointed and commanded by the Lord, and did continue all through the Levitical dispensation. Light was reflected thereon by the first declaration of grace, and the promise given to *Abraham*, which was improved by what was declared concerning the Person of the glorious Messiah in whom and by whom, all contained in the declaration of grace, the promises of the same, as also in the types, sacrifices, and figures thereto belonging was most fully and clearly expressed; yet all this was carried into actual accomplishment in the day in which *John* and the apostles lived. As all God's purposes have their fixed periods for their fulfilment, so the time fixed for the Incarnation of Christ, his appearance in our world, his manifestation in the flesh, together with the work he should perform, and the office he was to execute, were all foretold: and they were accomplished during the time *John* and his brother apostles lived in our world. To contract the subject as much as possible, and set it forth in one grand focus, I would say, our apostle lived when the greatest of all God's vast and eternal designs was accomplished, the Incarnation of Christ. He saw Him who is the only begotten Son of God, manifested in the flesh: even him, who was the brightness of glory, in whom shone forth all the manifestative glory of God. The Person who was immediately revealed and spoken of upon the fall, as the Bruiser of the serpent, the Saviour of his church, the true Seed of *Abraham*, the Shiloh, as the Prophet like unto *Moses*, even that great Prophet which should come into the world. Even him who was the Antitype of the sacrifices, tabernacle, temple, altar, priests, who was the one grand subject of prophecy, and the very sum and substance of the same—*John* lived when this most glorious and illustrious One came into our world by his open incarnation; to perform all things which had been written of Him—To save his people from their sins, by the sacrifice of Himself—To bring in for them in his one perfect and immutable obedience, an everlasting righteousness—To conquer all his and their enemies: and to save them in Himself with an everlasting salvation. You and I live not in the age in the which this event took place, nor when these great things were completed. We are not the less blessed in Christ on that account; yet it must be allowed it must have had some peculiar blessings and blessedness, which could not but be peculiar to them. It must have been peculiar to *Adam* and his wife, and they must have found a peculiar blessing in it, that they were the first who heard of salvation from all the ruins of the fall, by a glorious Saviour, who was to be of the seed of the woman, and who was to bruise the serpent's head. To publish and transmit the knowledge of the same must have given them unspeakable delight. It must have been the same to *Noah* and *Abraham*, to *Isaac* and *Jacob*, to *Moses*, *Isaiah*, and all the prophets. Whilst this is

allowed, it must have been matter of increasing joy to those who lived at the Advent of Christ. *Solomon* expresses the desires of all saints for the accomplishment of this blessing of blessings, the Incarnation of the Essential Word, and Son of God, in these words. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, a tree of life." Prov. xiii. 12. Christ was the only object and foundation of faith and hope to his church: from the first revelation and promise of Him was the space of 4000 years: in this interval he made many appearances to several of his saints: yea, he uttered his voice, saying in heaven, before the throne, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Ps. xl. 7, 8. The church heard it, and she cried out—"The voice of my beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Song ii. 8: yet there being a delay in his speedy appearance and manifestation in the flesh, the saints were sick in holy longings for the Desire of all nations: who when he came was a *tree of life* unto them: He having everlasting life, and all the blessings of the same to bestow upon his saints. To fill up this, we may say, the following words are very expressive of the joy of saints, who were in our world at the Advent of Christ: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isa. xxv. 9. I have introduced all this, as a solemn, introductory preface, to what is expressed and contained in these words before us, in the which our apostle says, *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* In opening and explaining the same, I will set before you the following particulars, and that in the following method and order.

1. The apostle here speaks of and for himself, and for others: *And we have seen and do testify.*

2. I will express and set before you, what he, and those he includes with himself, had both seen and testified of: it was this, *the Father sent the Son.*

3. What the Son was sent for—*To be the Saviour of the world.* In going through this I shall leave out these two words, *to be*, which are a supplement to the text, and will give my reason for so doing. The subject before us is most truly glorious. The Lord forbid it should be marred in or by my attempt to open and explain the same. I am

1. To open and explain what the apostle here speaks of and for himself, and on behalf of others, in these words, *And we have seen and do testify.*

He had been speaking in the context of the love of God, of the manifestation of it: this he set forth in the Person, gift, and mission of Christ; who was by God's own appointment the propitiation for sin; even for our sins. He then brought the whole weight of this immense subject on the minds of the saints, that it might operate, and produce its most powerful effects on their minds: to the excitement of mutual love, from a sense of God's love in Christ Jesus unto them. He had said, he, and others were brought to know the love of God to them, by its most blessed effects; which the Holy Spirit which God had given them, had so blessedly realized unto them, that they could say for themselves, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit:* then he says, *And we have seen and do testify*

that the *Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*. Now we, I myself, and the rest of the apostles have seen this love, evidenced, and bear our testimony concerning it, as it has been realized unto us in the Incarnation of Christ, the glorious Messiah, the Sent One of God. We have seen the greatest promise which God ever gave to his church, and together with it the greatest evidence and display of love, which the Lord God could give of the same. It hath been set before us in the Person of Christ—In the gift of Christ—In the salvation of Christ. We have seen Immanuel: even Him of whom all the prophets witnessed. We have seen Him incarnate, and with the eyes of our body, who was the Antitype of the Temple: who was seen by *Isaiah* in the Holy of Holies: who shone forth as God-Man between the Seraphim, in a vision: whom the prophet worshipped as the Lord of hosts. We have seen Him; we have conversed with Him, during his abode in this world, in his incarnate state. Some of us saw Him shine forth in his Personal glory, on the mount of transfiguration. His glory was as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. I conceive it will not be amiss here to stop and observe, that whilst in the patriarchal ages, Christ made many appearances to saints; as he also did by several visionary discoveries of Himself under the prophetic age: yet none of this came up to the display of his grace, bestowed on the apostles, who saw Christ in his incarnate state, and conversed with him in the days of his flesh, and were appointed to be his witnesses unto the people, by reciting and giving a clear account and narrative of the whole they knew of him; by the means of which poor sinners, were by the grace of the Holy Spirit, led to believe on him: *we have seen*, says *John*, *God manifested in the flesh*. We have seen what he did, and we have also heard what he taught: we are his witnesses, of all things which he did, and suffered: we bear our testimony concerning his sufferings, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, his glorification, and of the undeniable evidence which he hath given to the truth of all, by sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven, to set his seal to the confirmation of all this. *We have seen and do testify*, that the Father sent the Son at the fixed and appointed time. His end in sending him was, *to be the Saviour of the world*. All things were solemnly prepared for the introduction of Messiah into our world—The revelation of Him—Then a most costly train of sacrifices to proclaim Him as the Lamb of God, who was to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—Then a glorious company of prophets going as it were before Him—Then their prophecies as so many full and accurate accounts of Him—Then He himself appears, and the angels of heaven proclaim him, and sing his praise—Then the Father and the Spirit acknowledge Him to be the Son of God, when he was baptized of *John* in *Jordan*. After this he makes his public appearance as the Messiah: He chose twelve men to be with him: of whom *John* was one: and eleven of these clave unto him, and were his witnesses, and those of them who wrote Scripture, and which may be found in the New Testament, may be said to be so still. I conceive this may in part, serve as an opening of these words, *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*. I will

2. Set forth and further express, what our apostle, and those he includes with himself, had both seen and testified of. It was this—*The Father sent the Son*. A most essential and important Truth, on which

all the faith of the New Testament, and of the New Testament saints wholly rests: *we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son.*

All the faith of the Old Testament was founded on the revelation of Messiah to come. The one grand and sole promise of the Old Testament in the which all others centered, and on which they all depended, was for the substance thereof contained in such words as these, "He shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them." Isa. xix. 20: which the prophet anticipating the fulfilment of, says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." chap. ix. 6. This was carried into its full accomplishment, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* This was in *John's* day. He saw this most adorable Person. He heard him pronounce his heavenly doctrine. He conversed with Him. He includes the other apostles with himself, and says, *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son.* This was one of the most important matters of fact which ever could be testified of, and borne witness unto. Nothing could be more clearly spoken of by all the prophets, which have been since the world began, than that this event should take place. As also when, where, and how it should be fully ascertained. The events going before, and which were to follow after being most expressly certified; yet when all depended on all the prophecies being fulfilled in one most singular and adorable Person, who was Jesus of Nazareth the Son of *Joseph*, it required the mighty power and grace of the Holy Spirit, to lead the mind to believe this was *He*, in whom all the Scriptures meet: who was the subject of them—The object of the Father's everlasting love—The foundation and centre of prophecy—The Son of God's love. The Fellow of the Lord of hosts. The God-Man. Who said of himself, *I and my Father are one. As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* The apostles knew *Jesus of Nazareth* to be the Christ of God. It must have been from his own declarations of this immutable Truth: as also from the miracles he wrought: from his references to the Old Testament scriptures concerning it. *Peter, James, and John*, were eye-witnesses of his Majesty on the holy mount, when his glory in which he shone forth, was as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. They knew Him to be the true Messiah from the miracles he wrought—From the sufferings he sustained—From the death he submitted unto. His burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, with his shedding the Holy Ghost on them, after his session at the right hand of the Majesty on High, were all full and all-sufficient proofs to them of his Person as God manifest in the flesh—Of his true and proper Messiahship—Of his being that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them—Of his having been set forth in the scriptures of the prophets—Of his having realized in his own Person, and fulfilled in his own life and passion all they wrote and spake of Him. As He therefore appointed them after his resurrection to be his witnesses unto the people, He qualified them for this, by enduing them with power from on high.

This leads me on to observe, all the Truth contained in the Old Testament concerning the Person of the Messiah, and as realized and accom-

plished in our Christ—our faith herein, rests wholly and entirely upon the witness and testimony of *John* and the rest of the apostles. I will therefore observe and set before you, what they had seen, and what they did testify concerning the Father having sent his Son. Let me first observe, their testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, was in the form of a narrative. Read the four evangelists, and let me ask you this question: What is it but an historical account of the Lord Jesus Christ? yet it is such as contains everlasting life: without the true knowledge of which we must perish everlastingly. Read *Peter's* Sermon delivered to *Cornelius* and his family, as recorded in the 10th chapter of the *Acts*, and *Paul's* Sermon preached at *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, as recorded in the 13th chapter of the *Acts*; and say, if they are not both sacred narratives of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let me here say, it is the true knowledge of His Person, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, is the foundation of all true faith and hope in Him: and this abstracted from all consideration of any experience, or quality, or inherency of grace and sanctification in us. Our apostle here saith, *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son.* *Peter* saith, “And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts x. 39—43. *Paul* says, “Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Acts xiii. 26—35.

To me it most fully appears, that what they had seen, and testified, in this one grand expression of it, was one and the same. They had seen Christ in the flesh: for though the apostle *Paul* might not, yet he saw Christ in Person, after He had been glorified in Heaven, which gave him as full evidence of His being the true Messiah, as could have been given him, had he seen Christ in His incarnate state. Yea, it added additional confirmation to the same. So that here, their and his testi-



mony agreed, that Messiah had been manifest: that the Father had sent Him, that Jesus of Nazareth of whom *John the Baptist* said, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." John i. 30—34. Then *John the Baptist*, and the apostles of Christ, were the great witnesses of the advent and incarnation of our most adorable Lord: and the latter bore their testimony that they had seen Christ in the flesh. They testified the truth of this. They bare record that He was the Word of God. They also held forth the testimony of Jesus Christ, in their preaching his everlasting gospel, and of all things which they saw, and heard of him, and from him: and *that the Father sent him*. This leads back to the eternal acts and transactions of the Trinity in Unity before the world was: in which God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And this ministry of reconciliation was committed unto the apostles: and it was their message which they had to deliver unto the people; "That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." saying, by way of explaining this, "For he hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 21. This was the subject and substance of the ministry of the apostles: which is now by their writings reduced into one grand summary styled the apostles' doctrine: in the true knowledge and belief of which, we receive life into our minds, in our believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God. The apostles had seen Christ: they in their testimony of and concerning Him, whether it was verbal, or in writing, bore their witness both of what they had seen, and were witnesses of. This seems as it is brought in here, to be in contradiction to the doctrine of the false prophets, heretics, and antichrists of the then present day. They denied Christ was come. The apostles affirmed He was come. They denied the Personality of the Father and the Son. The apostles of the Lord and Saviour, continued in the profession of the doctrine of the Father and the Son; *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son*. This was all the evidence which God himself could give: they knew Jesus Christ was He: they therefore having seen the true *Immanuel*, God with us, bore their testimony to the truth and reality of his Person—That he was the great Prophet which should come into the world. They testified that He was the Son of God—The Sent One—That he came from the Father, and that he had sent him—That the Father bore his testimony at Jordan, and on the mount, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*—That the Holy Ghost anointed Him, rested on Him, and filled Him with his gifts and graces without measure—That the Father testified of Him that he was his Son, at his resurrection from the dead. All which was most solemnly renewed and realized when the Holy Ghost came down on the day of *Pentecost* and crowned him afresh Lord and Christ, by his open

and visible descent on them. All this is now, with all the importance and Divine energy contained in the same, in the gospels, and epistles written by them, and the which are contained and set before us in the same. The Father's sending the Son, this was agreeable to what had been declared in the Old Testament, and by Christ himself in the New. We have these words spoken in the Person of the all-glorious Mediator. "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me." see Isa. xlviii. 16. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John vi. 38. Our Lord refers to the covenant transaction between the Father and himself before the world was; which was carried into execution agreeable to the will of the Divine co-equal Three, in that glorious display of grace, by the Father's sending his Son out of his bosom into our world by his incarnation. and open manifestation in the flesh. All which owed its originality to the will of the Eternal Three, as it had been expressed by the Holy Trinity in their mutual stipulations. Christ was sent as Mediator, to perform salvation work in our nature, and world, and then to return to the Father, to be glorified with him for it. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John xvi. 28. The Father's call and appointment of Christ, to be the Head of the elect, with his mission and commission, and full execution of the same, is the everlasting gospel; and *John* and the apostles testified of this; *We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* This then was the full sum and substance of their ministry. Never were men more immediately sent out by Christ. Never were any more qualified by the gift of the Holy Ghost, or fitted for their work. Never were men more faithful to the charge committed to their trust: neither were any ever more successful. They preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. As they declared and most fully and clearly testified that the Father sent the Son, which was in the whole substance of it, contrary to all the antichrists and heresies in their day, so I would enter on my last particular, which is this;

3. To consider, what the Son was sent for. In going through these words, *to be the Saviour of the world*, I shall leave out these two words *to be*, for this reason, because I think they diminish from the grandeur of the text. Which without them reads thus; *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world.*

This seems to be in my view, such a setting the crown on our Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour, as is most truly glorious and divine; and more especially so, as Christ is not now to be the Saviour. He is so. He hath finished his work. He is in Heaven crowned with glory everlasting. He is in the presence of God, living after the power of an endless life. The true *Melchisedec*: who hath an unchangeable priesthood; wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. But all this being founded on his salvation completed upon earth, it is therefore but the fruits and effects thereof. I therefore being a great friend to salvation finished in the Person of Christ, and actually accomplished by his obedience and most precious bloodshedding, and confirmed by those most important words of his, *It is finished*, think these two words *to be*, better

omitted. *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world.* There is a glory and majesty in these words which is inexpressible. They reach the vast end and design of God, for which he sent his Son into our world—Even to save the world, and that in himself, and by himself alone, with an everlasting salvation. Yet what are we here to do with the *world*? just the same, as we had to do with it, when we met with it in the 2nd verse of the 2nd chapter of this Epistle, where the apostle said, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ being an Advocate with the Father, he added, “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” It was there observed the expression could by no means extend itself beyond the elect: so neither can it here. The Saviour of the world, implies those who are comprehended in the term *world*, are saved: otherwise how can Christ be said to be the Saviour of the world, if all included by the apostle in this term *world*, are not the saved of the world! I conceive leaving aside all prejudice, and being contented to let Scripture be its own interpreter, there is a glory in such general expressions. Our Lord saith, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” *John the Baptist* said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The *Samaritans* said to the woman, *we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* These are all most blessed and glorious expressions, in their true place, and with their proper meanings affixed unto them. To explain them, the term *world* must be considered. Then why it is made use of by our Lord and others in the places cited; and what the design of the Holy Ghost is in these words here before us, *the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world.* Our Lord had this name imposed on him at his circumcision, *Jesus.* The reason for which is given by an angel before his birth: *and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.* He was in union with his people before all time. It was because they were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He gave himself for them, as their Surety. He gave himself for their sins. He bare their sins in his own body on the tree. He was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. He died for the sins of his beloved ones. He redeemed them completely out of the hands of all their enemies. He conquered sin, the world, Satan, with his principalities and powers; yea, death and hell. He loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. As all the redeemed are secured in Christ, and complete in Him, and are in their individual persons scattered over the whole globe, why are not the expressions *world*, and *the whole world* suited to express this? or, why may not the term *world* be suited to express that Christ is the Saviour of Gentile sinners who are of the number of the elect, as well as of the Jews who belong to the election of grace? I would add this to the subject. Why may not this general term be designed to suggest God’s elect are all the world over—That Christ having put away their sins by the Sacrifice of Himself, they shall all, each, and every individual of

them hear the voice of the Son of God, and in hearing, live: nothing shall be found to make against them; neither country, kindred, sinfulness, nor circumstances. No; Christ is the Saviour of the elect—of the whole of them, so as that it may well be expressed by his being the Saviour of the world. This the apostles testified of. Where is the evidence of this to be found? in this one single Scripture—*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* And this put to our text, *Saviour of the world*, most fully and sweetly accords and unites in this glorious crown put on the Head of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Saviour of the world.* Indeed so He is, in the sense I have given of it. All the saved of the Lord in glory, owe their whole, entire and complete salvation to Him alone: and to Him and the Divine Father they ascribe it; “saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” Rev. vii. 10. And this will be the worship and song of the whole election of grace for ever and ever. It might be observed our Lord bore the title *Jesus* on the cross. He wears the same now in heaven. He is well pleased with the same. Therefore he said to his persecutor, *Saul of Tarsus, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*

The apostles in what they had seen in Christ, were most abundantly enabled to speak of Him. In what they testified of Him, they gave evidence they had been with Him: and they have left on record in their writings such an account of the Father’s love in Him, to the whole election of grace, and of the most perfect work of Jesus the Saviour, as none but themselves could give. There is nothing in their testimony concerning Christ, and salvation in Him, and by Him alone, but is in its own nature calculated to encourage our hearts, and hopes, and draw out our minds towards Him. He hath all power in heaven and earth as Mediator. He is an almighty Saviour. His blood exceeds our utmost stain—His Death our utmost sin. His blood, its purity, virtue, and efficacy, though it be declared in the everlasting gospel, and we have apprehended it in our own minds, by the faith of the operation of God, yet we never shall fully comprehend, even that which we believe concerning it from the Scriptures of Truth. No; The Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of our Lord as expressed in his mysterious incarnation, and in all which He did and suffered in his humiliation-state, surpass and transcend all that we can possibly apprehend. Not but that the whole of what is contained therein, is as fully set forth in the word of revelation as it possibly can be. Yet the mind cannot, no, not even as enlightened by the Holy Ghost so as to apprehend what is revealed and recorded thereof in the word of grace—yea it can never be fully raised up to the same. It has the true idea, and an apprehension of all the reality and importance of these subjects; but not of the full glory and majesty of that which is contained in them. All contained in both Testaments respecting our Lord Jesus Christ, may be so reflected on our minds, as that we thereby may have a most blessed perception of what is contained therein, and our minds may thereby be raised up to Him, and fixed on Him, as our Head, our Saviour, our Portion, our Treasure, our Inheritance, our everlasting All: but we cannot clearly and fully apprehend what is contained in all this. No; this we cannot whilst we are confined in this mortal state; neither shall we ever fully know Christ, nor his salvation, even when we are with Him in Heaven, and the state of eternal

Glory. Our Lord Jesus Christ outshines all the glory given unto Him, in both the Old and New Testaments: so He also doth in the whole sum-total of all expressed of Him, in and throughout the whole revelation of Him, in his Person, work, grace, and offices, in the everlasting gospel. The Father sent him the Saviour of the world. He is the Saviour of the whole elect world, and of every individual in it. This honour the Father hath bestowed on Him. No purity and perfection in any of the saved in heaven, but in his blood and righteousness. Nor on earth either. It is the blood of Christ alone, which cleanseth us, now, this very moment, and continually from all sin, in the sight of God. It is the Righteousness of Christ, God-Man, is the only perfection; and it is now, and evermore, the only perfection of all the saved ones, in the sight of and before the Lord. It may be, you will find I am so short on so glorious a subject, that instead of being fed and feasted, you have rather been disappointed. I have nothing to say, should this be found to have been the case, but that I am the least of all the servants of my Lord, and have done as well I could. You must therefore look wholly and alone to Him, who in one moment can give you that view of himself, which will put down all you ever heard of him by the hearing of the ear. May you therefore look unto Him. Amen.

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## SERMON LXVI.

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*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.—I JOHN IV. 15.*

As we have been going through our comment on this Epistle, it hath not been that each subject is at once fully gone through; nor could it be avoided; and it has been observed, and we shall at this time find it also necessary to observe, that the subjects in it are not always closely connected. One subject is dropped, and another taken up, and this frequently: this hath been the case in the chapter before us. It began with a solemn caution against hearing and giving way to false teachers; a clear and certain account was given of them—Who were the true teachers, and who were the false: their doctrine and their hearers are both so expressly mentioned, as there can be no classing them together. This subject is dropped at the close of the 6th verse: then the subject of loving one another is taken up, and very expressly stated. To inforce and also to excite to this, the subject of God's love is most sweetly mentioned: and this as the foundation and motive of our loving one another. God in his own incomprehensible Nature, is the ocean and fountain of love: it is an act of his will: He hath manifested the same to us in the Person of Christ: He hath most gloriously displayed and given the

fullest evidence of it, in the gift and mission of his Son—In sending Him to be the Propitiation for our sins. This lays us under an everlasting obligation to love one another. Thus, and hereby, our love flows back again to God, as the original of love, as waters to the ocean. Our apostle then enters on another part of the same subject; he speaking of himself, and the rest of the apostles, and this he does in distinction from the false teachers and antichrists, whom he had before spoken of; *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* As the truth of the Old Testament rests wholly and alone, on the revelation God hath been pleased to give us therein, concerning an everlasting covenant which obtained between the Father and the Son, of the which, and respecting the execution of the same, all the sacrifices, prophecies, promises, and prophets bore witness and testified; so the whole and entire truth of the New Testament, which was founded on the former, rested and still does rest, on the testimony of the apostles, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle therefore adds these words to what he had before affirmed: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* The Person, obedience, sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God, formed that which the apostles preached and testified of. It was what they had seen, and learnt, and were by Christ himself commanded to declare unto the people: and this was altogether contrary to the damnable heresies of those days: the apostle therefore declaring what he and the holy apostles had learnt from Christ himself, *that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,* declares in the words of our present text, who was on the Lord's side, and who was not: this was the touch-stone of sound doctrine; *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* It was by this one article of faith, true believers and true preachers were to be known. In the words before us is contained the one great and important article of the true faith of God's elect; in the which all the truths of the everlasting gospel are summarily expressed. Christ being the Son of God, the whole of his doctrine is a divine and an everlasting truth. It seems to me, most agreeable with what went before, to consider the apostles and their preaching, as set in contradistinction, to false teachers in that day. One of their chief heresies was, denying Christ was come in the flesh: these words therefore now before us are full evidence that he only was right, who openly and fully confessed Christ. Whosoever, whether an apostle, or one in rank and dignity in the church of Christ inferior to such, who did or should confess the Lord Jesus Christ to be *the Son of God,* such an one was most truly right: he confessing the Person, Sonship, and Messiahship of the ever-blessed Lord Jesus, God dwelt in him, and he in God: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* In my treating on these words now before me, I will aim to set these following particulars before you, hoping in so doing to give you the true interpretation, and also the substance of the whole contained in them.

1. I will consider what is here to be understood by these words, *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* I shall aim to give the meaning of this, in the genuine sense which the apostle here intended it.

2. I will observe, that under this article of believing and con-

fessing *Jesus to be the Son of God*, the whole faith of the gospel is included.

3. What we are to understand by *God's dwelling in such, as confess that Jesus is the Son of God*: and how such an one dwelleth in *God, and God in him*. In going through these subjects, what is professed and confessed of Christ, and that every essential truth of the everlasting gospel is included, and that the preaching of Christ is making a public profession of Him; as such it is to the glory of the Lord: and it is a good evidence to such as so confess Him, as that He in all things may be glorified, that they are on the Lord's side, be they preachers or hearers: and that they enjoy this inestimably glorious blessing of God's dwelling in them, and their dwelling in God—This will be wrought up into the particulars, so as to enlarge them, or as filling them up, or as explanatory of them. May the Lord God most graciously be pleased, to lead me through all this, to the praise of the glory of his grace. I am

1. To consider what is here to be understood by these words,—*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*.

I will endeavour by connecting these words with the former verse, to give the clear and true meaning of them. The former words were these; *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*: then these follow—*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*. What can be conceived to be the genuine meaning of these words other than this?—That the confession that Jesus of Nazareth, was in his Divine Nature the Son of God! This was the very truth which the anti-christs in *John's* days, so awfully denied. It is in direct opposition to them, the apostle wrote a great part of this Epistle. Therefore a sound faith in this essential and fundamental truth, is most assuredly what must be contained in these words; which seems to be most fully confirmed by this inexpressible blessing of grace which is here connected with it—*God dwelleth in him, and he in God*. It cannot be a common faith: neither can it be a notional faith; nor a mere historical faith. The object believed on, the acknowledgment of the Person believed in, with the indwelling of God in the believer, and the believer's dwelling in God, effectually set aside all other acts of faith and confession of Christ, but true gospel supernatural faith in Him, who is the Saviour whom the Father hath sent, whom the apostles had seen and did testify of: who was the Christ of God, the true and only Messiah, who should come into the world, according to all that was spoken concerning Him by the prophets in and throughout the Old Testament Scriptures of Truth; the which was fulfilled in God's raising up unto *Israel, a Saviour, Jesus*. The titles, *Jesus Christ*, are descriptive of Christ Jesus in his work and office. His *Person as the Son of God*, is the foundation of his offices, It is not a confession of him in his offices, but in his Person, which is the subject of our text. And it was his Person which was immediately fought against, by the false teachers in the apostle's time: to prove this I would cite the following passages from our apostle: he asks this question and answers it himself; "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son, Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." chap. ii. 22, 23. Now

it is evident there were those who denied Jesus to be the true Messiah : this was to be antichrist : and those who did so, were anti-trinitarians, they were so, completely—They denied the doctrine of the Divine Personalities—They denied the Father and the Son : so that they rejected Christ as being a Divine Person with the Father ; his Son being of the same Substance, Nature, and Essence with Him, co-equally and co-essentially with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the Unity of One and the same incomprehensible Godhead. The Person of Christ must be preserved, or the Messiahship of Christ cannot be maintained. The Messiahship of Christ adds nothing to his Person, but his Person is the foundation of his Messiahship. This is expressed in the word *Christ* : which signifies *Anointed* ; and is again and again given to Him who was to come into the world, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. In this our present chapter, the apostle expressly asserts that such as acknowledged *Christ* was come into the world, were of God ; and that such as did not, were not of God—That this disowning of Christ as the true Messiah, was the spirit of antichrist. He then coming to the words now before us, says, *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* What fairer inference and more clear evidence can be drawn from the words, as the real meaning of them, than this?—That by confessing Jesus, is designed a public acknowledgment of Christ—That He is Jesus the Saviour. Salvation was his incommunicable work. He was the Anointed One. His office is to bestow and communicate to his people, all the blessings of the same. He is in his Person, *the Son of God*, or he had not been the Messiah. Therefore, whosoever shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that eternal life is in Him, gives full proof and evidence that God dwelleth in him, and that he dwelleth in God. This appears to me to be the clear outline of these words. To the which I would add, it must be attended to, the time and the state the church of Christ was now in : it was surrounded with error : it was encompassed also with persecution, and much of this was from false professors, and erroneous persons who had gone out from amongst them. Now to stand up for Christ, and boldly confess this truth, not fearing the consequences which would come upon them for it—that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the whole bulk and body of the Jews had put to death, and hated with implacable hatred, was *the Son of God* : this, as it plainly evidenced they were believers in Him, so it led also to a full discovery they were on the Lord's side, and believed Him to be, what they professed Him to be. Surely the apostle might safely and truly say individually of each and all such, whosoever believeth or shall confess that Jesus, that most glorious and all-sufficient Saviour whom we preach, is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. I think this comes close and pertinent to the very connection, and also to the very letter of the text : nor does this by any means set aside any true use of the text, as it may respect us, or any or every one of the saints, down to the end of time, even throughout all generations. Let me just observe, the Person of Christ is a subject of itself : the work performed by Him, is another ; and his office is another. I might add, and faith so to know Christ in his Person, work, and office, is distinct also. The true knowledge of Christ in the mind, and of his work and office, is the foundation of faith in the heart ; and this drawn forth into act and exercise upon him, is that which most evidently proves that such and such are true believers in



Him. So that here come in these words, *God dwelleth in him, and he in God*: this is the proof of it—Such an one believeth that Jesus is the Son of God: the truth of this is as true as God is true. It is by the power of God this truth is received into the heart: it is by the power of God this truth is maintained in the mind: it is by the indwelling of this truth in the renewed mind, full and clear evidence is given, that God dwelleth in that person: as the person in whom this most important truth dwelleth, most evidently demonstrates to others, that he dwelleth in God: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

I hope I have given you clear light into the words before us, as it hath a regard to the apostle's meaning in them. They in their first and primary meaning respect and regard such as were preachers of the gospel in *John's* day, in a very special manner: this I have endeavoured to state, and give you an idea of. So that from the same, so far as I myself understand my own meaning, that person who publicly acknowledged Christ in his work, office, and Person, he was truly of God: by confessing Christ to be what He really was, must be to preach and declare all this openly and freely: his very so doing this in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, was full demonstration of God's dwelling in all the perfection of this knowledge and efficacy of this truth in the mind. So that such as were kept from this *lie* of denying Christ to be what He was, and openly acknowledged Him to be in his Divine Person the Son of God, it was evident that the Father had revealed Him to be such unto them, and it is this the apostle lays this great emphasis upon: and he extends it as an universal immutable truth to all christians, be they preachers, or hearers; *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* This then is an essential truth of the gospel, witnessed unto in all the Scriptures, confessed by *Peter*, who said to our Lord, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*: and was thereon pronounced *Blessed*: and our Lord said the revelation of this knowledge was from his Divine Father. See Matt. xvi. 16, 17. And at another time, the same *Peter* pronounced the same faith, as the public confession of the apostles, and we may say of the whole church; "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 69. So that our apostle seems to speak after Christ, when he says in the words of our text: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*; which seems to me equal with these words of Christ, "Blessed art thou, Simon-Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 17, 18.

2. I will observe and shew, that believing, and confessing Christ to be the Son of God—under this article, the whole faith of the gospel is included.

Our apostle speaking of what was related and contained in his gospel, with his professed design in writing it, says, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31. Surely we have the whole of Christ, in the gospel of *John*: and we have

His declaration of the same: then this fully confirms, that believing and confessing Christ, comprehends and includes the whole gospel, and every article thereof. The whole gospel, as revealed in the Old Testament, or as recorded in the New, considered as witnessed by the prophets, testified unto by the apostles, is one most glorious, comprehensive and full of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the whole fulness and perfection of his Person, as God-Man. His majesty, grace, salvation, offices, merits and glory, are revealed in it, and set forth by it, in the preaching of the same. It is the revelation of Him in the word of the gospel, that is the ground and warrant of our believing on Him to life everlasting. So that Christ and faith, or, the gospel, and believing on Christ for salvation are so connected one with the other, that the terms confession, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, are expressive of the whole gospel. In the preaching of Christ, this is to make a public confession and acknowledgment of Him. It is a celebration of his glorious praise: it is with design to make Him known; that sinners may be turned unto the Father: that the heart of Christ may be opened: the bowels of Christ expanded: the compassions of Christ spoken out: the Righteousness and Justice of Christ exalted, in their virtue, worth, and efficacy, as above, and exceeding and transcending all sin and the sinfulness of all creatures in the same, as it respects the whole election of grace. Now together with this, every doctrine of the everlasting gospel, with every article of our most holy faith, is included. The gospel in every part of it, with all the mysteries contained in the same, is alone suited to faith; which is the one faculty suited to it.—To apprehend it.—To receive it.—To acknowledge it.—To enjoy it. The apostle styles the gospel, “The word of life, which we preach.” Rom. x. 8. I conceive this sufficiently expresses, and is all-sufficient to shew, that under the terms of confessing, and believing in or on the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel is implied: and with the same every part of our most holy faith is included: it most fully is so, in these words before us; *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* Surely connected with this most sublime article of our most holy faith, must be included therein. This must, it cannot but appear to every one whose mind is opened to read the Scripture with the least attention. It will most easily appear to them, and their judgments cannot but be directed to consider, if Christ be the Son of God, God must be his Father: if He hath been manifested in the flesh, then the Holy Ghost must have had a concern in the formation and articulation of his humanity, and in the sanctification and consecration of Messiah.—In the filling Him up perfectly investing Him, with all the fulness, and that to an immeasurable degree with the whole fulness of inherent grace and glory, that the Man Christ Jesus united to the Person of the Son of God, might be fitted to perform the part of a glorious Mediator. This includes the Father’s everlasting love of the Father: the covenant of grace: the incarnation of Christ: His suretyship: His work and office as Mediator: His incarnation, together with the whole execution of the same in the life and death of our most precious Lord Jesus Christ. And with all this the Person, and Personal office of the Holy Ghost, with his sacred communications of grace on the minds of his believing people, are most fully united: they neither can nor must be separated from the former; otherwise we have not the whole system of the constitution of grace,

formed in the infinite mind, agreed unto in the will, council and cover of the Three in Jehovah, and revealed and made known in the gospel of the blessed God. So that as this is the summary of same; to profess Christ, and to preach Christ are for the substance thereof one and the same. *Saul of Tarsus* being brought to the knowledge of Christ, it is said of him, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Acts ix. 20: The high treasurer of *Candace* queen of the *Ethiopians*, having proposed himself to be baptized, *Philip* said unto him, "If thou believest with thine heart, thou mayest." On which he rejoined, "I believe that Christ is the Son of God." Acts viii. 37. The apostle speaking of his own ministry and that of his son *Timothy* to the church of *Corinth* says, "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but it was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen unto the glory of God by us." 2 Cor. i. 18—20. By their faith in Jesus Christ, and preaching him to be the Son of God, they glorified the Lord, and hereby evidence was given that God dwelt in them, and they dwelt in God. As faith is that faculty by the which the knowledge of Christ, and his great salvation is received into the mind, so the whole gospel, and every truth in it, is expressed in the Scriptures of the New Testament under this term. We read of *the faith—the faith once delivered unto the saints—your most holy faith*. And we have also words also, *Greet them that love us in the faith*: and, a commandment, *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith*. In all which all the doctrines of the everlasting gospel are intended and included.

So we see by all this, that the gospel and all it contains, is in the Scriptures of the New Testament, expressed by the term *faith*, as Christ also is, in these words, "But before faith came, we were shut," or "shut under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Gal. iii. 23—25. In this quotation these words, *before faith came*, and *after that faith is come*, Christ himself is spoken of: certain it is Christ is the immediate object of faith and his salvation is the subject on which it is exercised. This is at first set before us in the scriptures by acknowledging Christ to be God—The Son of God—The glorious Mediator—The Christ of God—The Messiah—The Lord the righteousness, strength, and salvation of his church and people—The only Mediator between God and man. And in the preaching the gospel, and in our open acknowledgments of Him, he is acknowledged and we do acknowledge and confess Him in his incarnation, humiliation, obedience, sufferings, sacrifice, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and session at the right hand of the Majesty on high. All which agrees with what the apostle says, when he is speaking on the subject of believing. He says, *If thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*. This is consonant with what the Lord himself is pleased to say in the following words. "Look unto me, and be ye saved

the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength." Isa. xlv. 22—24. This most certainly is fully expressive of the faith of every individual who is brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the very confession which is made of him : and in this the whole article of believing and confessing the Son of God is contained. So that preachers confess their faith in Christ, and confess Him to be the Son of God, when they preach Him as revealed and testified of as such in the word of grace : we, in our individual persons, when we solemnly profess Him to be Christ the Anointed One : Jesus the Saviour : and in his Personal distinction as the Son of God. This was professed and confessed by us, when we were baptized in his Name as we also were in the Name of the Father and the Spirit : and in this truth we remain so long as we continue in the truth of the gospel of God our Saviour. It is faith in the Person of Christ, that He is the Son of God, is the subject of my text : and this was that which then distinguished the true believer from the infidel ; *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* This believing must include a believing with the heart, and also an outward confession and profession of the same, otherwise it could not be known. I come

3. To open and explain what we are to understand by God's dwelling in us and such as confess that Jesus is the Son of God ; and by such dwelling in God, and God in them : *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

I conceive in the first and immediate meaning of the apostles, it must have respect to such an one as preached the Person and Sonship of Christ—It was full evidence of God's dwelling in him, and possessing his mind with the true and proper knowledge of this truth. It was also full proof and evidence that the person dwelt in God in holy contemplations on Him—In holy communion with Him, and in most blessed enjoyments of his love : together with this, as we include all believers, I consider it must reach unto them all. The indwelling of God in this scripture before us, must be, as Personally understood, the Divine Father, who dwelleth and inhabits the mind, so as to let in most special and supernatural life and light, love and grace ; giving the believer thereby, most blessed evidence, enjoyment, and communion with him in the belief of this most essential and important truth of the everlasting gospel. As also admitting the believer in the true scriptural knowledge and belief of this truth, into such a dwelling in God, in the exercise of his spiritual mind on this most important verity, as leads unto special and intuitive communion with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in high adoring thoughts of this most incomprehensible mystery of our most holy faith. It is the Father by the Son and the Spirit, keeps up all spiritual communion, and heavenly life in our souls. It is by God's bestowing his Spirit on the saints, that He dwells in us : and it is by the Spirit, that we dwell in God, and God in us. The economy of the Divine Persons in grace, with their Personal union and communion with saints, which consist in their indwelling in them, and holding distinct and manifestative communion with them—this is a most ineffable truth of the gospel, which is altogether supernaturally, transcendently glorious, and wholly Divine. It

can only be apprehended and conceived of, by that spiritual faculty the Holy Ghost bestows on us in regeneration: it is wholly the subject for faith to be exercised on; sense can have nothing to do with it. I would therefore conclude this Sermon, saying, God the Father dwells in such, as confess that Jesus is the Son of God, by his own light and love, so as to prove to them, how He loves their persons in Christ, and how He stands in relation to them in the Son of his love: so as hereby to give proof to them, inwardly, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father in truth and love. He does not open to their minds how it is, but he gives them to know that so it is, and that upon his own testimony of it in the scriptures of Truth. He does not open their minds to understand how it is so, but he enlightens their minds to believe and acknowledge it is so. In the belief of this essential Truth, the saints dwell in God, by holy and heavenly communion with Him. I trust what hath been expressed will be found sufficient to cast gospel light upon the text: to which I would add, if this was a proof in the apostle's days, that such an one was right with God, who confessed the Person of Christ to be the Son of God, of the same Essence with the Father and the Spirit, in the One incomprehensible Essence, then such and such only can be the case now and for evermore. So that here come in the words of our apostle which he expressed in the 2nd chapter of this Epistle, v. 22, 23. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?—Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." The denial of Christ is to reject the whole gospel. The right confession of Christ, is to preserve and secure every truth of it. I will therefore conclude with the words of my text; *Who-soever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* May the Lord bless his Truth, so far as contained in what hath in this Sermon been delivered unto you. Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXVII.

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*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—*

I JOHN IV. 16.

THESE words most undoubtedly unite with what went before. The apostle had in the beginning of this chapter, given cautions against giving heed to every one who pretended to be a preacher of Christ; and shewing how such as were, and such as were not sent by the Holy Ghost might be distinguished, he enters on the subject of brotherly love. This he very powerfully enforces on such as were saints, from the consideration of the love of God and Christ towards us. Then he enters on the subject of the love of God towards us, in its origin, and fruits and effects; and seeing we cannot see God, nor know his love to us but by

its effects, so he most rightly infers, we cannot prove our love to Him, but by the effects of the same; which he would have to be manifested by our loving his image in saints, and thereby giving proof, that God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. He shews how we have a clear and full evidence of our union and communion with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us. Then our apostle most freely declares, joining himself with the other apostles who had been eye-witnesses of Christ in his incarnate state, that he and they were witnesses and did in their office and preaching testify concerning Christ, His ministry, miracles, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, that the Father sent Him, that is Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour of the world. This they bore testimony of, upon infallible evidence and certainty: to this *John* adds, *Whosoever*, in these very severe times of persecution, and in this day of errors and heresy, *shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God*, and that He hath been manifested in the flesh, and hath finished salvation work, and that the Christ, or Messiah rejected by the Jews is He whom the Father hath sent, and is the Saviour of Jews and Gentiles, and of all that believe on Him, is this one alone Saviour, *God dwelleth in him, and he in God*. This confession is the true and undeniable evidence of the truth of all contained in this. Such as have by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, these true, scriptural and spiritual apprehensions of Christ, hereby it is fully evinced and by the same it is manifested, that God dwells in them by his Spirit, and that they dwell in God by faith and hope, in the Person of the glorious Mediator, the God-Man, Christ Jesus. Then the apostle adds— And we have seen and in our own minds have had all these most divine and important truths realized, and recite the same for your present, increasing, and future benefit: *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. These words seem to be the ocean into which all contained in the verses going before, I mean from the 7th, seem to empty themselves, and here they are swallowed up. I will here recite them, that you may see and judge for yourself if it be not so; *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. Now I shall leave it with you to judge, if this last verse, which is my present text, be not the great and grand vortex which swallows up the other. I conceive it is: if so, then this is the sum-total of what is here declared by our apostle, in his own name, and that of the rest of the apostles. We have known

and believed the love that God hath loved them, and the whole church with in Christ—That God's love was one present and perpetual act—That such as knew it, rested in the full knowledge and belief thereof—That this is the blessed fruit and effect of the right spiritual knowledge and belief of the same; *He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* As the apostle makes use of the plural number, including others beside himself, and then makes use of the singular number and closes with the same, it seems to imply as if he designed the whole of the verse for himself, the apostles, and all saints: and as the glorious truth herein declared doth and cannot but belong to the whole church and household of God, I will therefore consider the same in their most extensive latitude. I will accordingly set them before you, and divide them thus, hoping it may be for your profit and satisfaction.

1. I will consider these words, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* Under this head, I will observe, the knowledge of God, is here expressed before our believing it, and that which is contained in the same: *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* The whole subject is thus applied: it is *we*, it is *us*, who are the subjects of this love; the knowledge and belief of which brings its divine consolation into the mind: this is very clearly manifest in the expressions used here.

2. Here is a most solemn and important assertion, *God is love.* It is not God hath loved, neither is it God will love; but it is, *God is love*, in the present tense. This we shall endeavour to enter into, and give an account how, and why it is thus expressed, as the Lord may be pleased to assist.

3. The blessedness which flows into the mind of saints herefrom. God dwelleth in such, and such dwell in him. This is here expressed in the singular number: *He dwelleth in God, and God in him.* I hope in going through these particulars, we shall have the essence and substance of the words, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* May the Lord guide me in this present explanation, to the praise and glory of his most holy Name. I am

1. To consider these words, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* Whilst I may consider this, as it belongs to the apostles, ministers, and all the saints, yet this will be my observation thereon, that the knowledge of God, and his love to us, are here expressed as going before our believing the same: *we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.*

Surely the apostles must be included in the *we*, and *us*: and why not all the true ministers of Christ, in that day, together with them? as they all preached one and the same Jesus, and held him forth in their ministrations, as the Son of God: by their public profession of which, it was fully and clearly evidenced, that God dwelt in them, and that they dwelt in God. It must also be the same with all those hearers of the gospel, who abode in and stood fast in this truth: so that our text is as thus considered expressive of the faith and knowledge of real saints, in all ages, and throughout all generations. Knowledge goes before believing: we must know God before we can believe in Him: we must know God's love before we can believe the same. We must know the love that God hath to us, or we can neither believe it nor enjoy it; for all true

faith and enjoyment, proceed from a true and clear apprehension of that which our spiritual minds are exercised on : and the apostle saith, " Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. All the riches and treasures of everlasting love are set open in the everlasting gospel. Christ is the Pearl of inestimable value which is hidden, treasured up and contained in this Cabinet. The Holy Ghost unlocks it, and shews us Christ the glorious Mediator, who is the power of God, and the wisdom of God : hereby we are brought to the knowledge of the Father in Him ; and by the word and by the Spirit we are led to scriptural views and apprehensions of what He is in Christ to us—of what his heart is towards us—of the love wherewith he loves us ; yea, that He is love, and nothing but love, to us in the Son of his love ; and this knowledge is the foundation of the whole of our faith in this great and incomprehensible mystery of grace. As it respects *we* and *us*, who are the children of the Most High God, who are not so immediately taught the knowledge of God as the apostles were ; for none of us pretend to such immediate tuition and irradiation of the Holy Ghost as the apostles had—we are taught by the same Spirit they were, we have the same scripture : and in our measure we are partakers of the same blessings and benefits. So that we are as truly enlightened and taught the same truths, and by the same Spirit the apostles themselves were ; but not so immediately and so fully ; yet as truly. Our light, knowledge, and apprehension of God, are from the revelation he hath most graciously given us of Himself in the Scriptures. It is from them, and by them, we are brought to know the Lord. This knowledge is formed in our minds : so that what we read in the word concerning the Father's love to us, we know the truth and reality of the same in our hearts. We believe it as we know and receive God's testimony concerning it : and hereby, and herefrom we can say for ourselves, as it is here said in the words before us, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* The love in God's heart hath shone forth in Christ. He hath shone into our hearts, so as to reflect the glory, grace, and blessed effects within us and on our minds : the whole is a full revelation of the same in all its glory and perfection. He hath spoken therein and said, *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* The Lord himself witnesses to this. We therefore being led by the Holy Spirit into the knowledge of Jehovah's love to us, from the revelation Himself hath given thereof, we know it : from thence we believe in those acts of it which passed in the infinite mind of God in Christ, respecting us in Him. Thus the knowledge of God's love is brought into our minds, from the revelation made of the same therein : and we are led in reading the scriptures, to believe in the revealed account thereof. This the Holy Ghost opens to us more and more by his own intuitive teaching, and He opens our minds in a gradual and imperceptible way to understand it, to exercise our minds on it, and also to enjoy it in our own hearts ; so as that we say, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* It would be of very great advantage to have right views of this. Whilst we have in our true and gospel experience, the blessed effects of God's love in our hearts, yet that is not the foundation of our knowing and believing the love of God to us. This is most assuredly a very blessed evidence of God's love to us, and may be made use of, as a



proof and demonstration of the truth of his having manifested the same to us; yet it is only so to our faith. Our knowledge that God is love—That he hath manifested his love to us in Christ, must originate out of ourselves entirely: it must spring from the word of revelation: it must go beyond all the acts, gifts and graces of the same: it must be known as it is in God himself; it being from this love, all the grace of God flows forth towards us. God is pleased so to speak of his love to us, and set it before us in the scriptures as to give us to understand that his love is to us, inherent in Himself; and that the bringing us to the knowledge of this, exceeds in blessedness, all the gifts of it; and all our enjoyments of it; yea, all the communion we can ever have with God in it even in Heaven and Glory. This hath led me many years past to say, I had rather know God's love than enjoy it. There can be no knowing and believing the love that God hath to us, but there must be an enjoyment of the same; yet the real spiritual knowledge of the subject infinitely exceeds the enjoyment of the same, be it either on earth or in heaven. So that the right meaning of the expression, or sentence, call it which you may, does by no means sink the subject, but exalt it. All our true believing the love God hath to us, proceeds from the knowledge we have of it: so that the one is the foundation and support of the other; from whence this follows, that the word of God is the foundation both of the one, and the other. What we know of God's love, that we believe of the same. Then as our true knowledge of the love of God to us, must proceed from the revelation he hath been pleased to make known of it to us in his most holy word, so all our faith in it, and belief concerning it, must be founded on the same word of inspiration. If this be not the language of the text, then I do declare I do not understand the same. I would observe, the words *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us*, are expressive of love immutable and unchangeable. It is, as one expresseth it, love past, it is love present, and a love which is to come. This agrees with his Name, which is incommunicable, *I AM THAT I AM. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

This is a truth, which when received into the mind, and dwelt upon in the real exercise of faith thereon, is all-sufficient to swallow up the mind to all eternity; for nothing can exceed it; no; not in heaven. To see and know the love that God hath, in all his Persons unto us; and to see it to be the foundation of all the counsels and thoughts of his own free grace towards us, this appears to me to be the essence of our text. And these saints in *John's* time knew it to be so: hence he could say for himself, and his fellow apostles, and for all other saints also, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* It is now what it was from eternity. There is no increase, nor can there be any decrease therein. He can never love us, beyond what he doth: nor can he ever more fully reveal it, or give us greater evidences thereof. His love is an essential perfection in his Nature: and as it hath pleased him to exercise it towards us, it is an act of his will; and it is the good pleasure of his will, to love us, for ever: the whole why and wherefore is in Himself. He hath declared the truth of it in the word. We have been brought to know it from the word: We having received the knowledge of this into our minds, we believe it: in the belief of it we see ourselves are the objects and subjects of God's everlasting love. We there-

fore boldly profess and declare what we know and believe of the same; and it is all declared in this sentence, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* He will ever continue his loving kindness unto us, so long as we have existence; be we in the body or out of it; let us be in a time, or in an eternal state: He will never cease to love us: nor will he ever cease to delight in us, and to rejoice in us, and over us to do us good. Let me observe, that the knowledge and belief of God's love to us, is that which alone can support and bear up a spiritual mind, and carry it on in the exercise of holy vigour and delight towards the Lord. As love begets love; and it is God's love known and believed which only can beget and draw forth love from us towards the Lord; so it is our knowing God's love to us, and our believing the same, as an immutable act in his own vast mind towards us, which, it is the act of his own will never to cease from for evermore—it is the true knowledge of it, keeps up and maintains in our minds the belief of this: and it is the continual belief of this, supports our hearts and minds at all times. So that the Lord in our own views, and also in our declarations of Him, and faith in him, is our shield, defence, and the strength of our confidence. I would further observe, the whole of this great subject, is thus brought home and applied unto saints, by our apostle: *we and us*: that is to saints in this very easy way and manner; *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* This was bringing the whole subject upon them. If they thus received it, their minds were opened to know and understand it, and their faith most freely to be exercised in the free and full belief and reception of the same. Beloved, to be among the number of the *we* and the *us* to whom the apostle here says, *And we have known and believed the love of God to us*, must be to be amongst the elect of God: and also, we must be such as those to whom the Lord has revealed himself in the exceeding riches of his grace: therefore let us not ignorantly cry down this passage, nor cry out there is no experience in it, lest we proclaim our own ignorance, which may redound to our own shame; for most assuredly the whole of the text contains, the whole essence, grace, and blessedness of all contained in the real, inward knowledge and enjoyment of God, either in the church militant, or the church triumphant. I proceed to my next head, which is to observe,

2. That we have in our text, a most solemn and important assertion, *God is love.* It is not that God shall, neither is it God will; but it is *God is love*; in the present tense. This I shall endeavour to enter into, and give an account how, and why it is thus expressed, as the Lord may be pleased to assist. I will here again recite my text, that we may thereby see, where we are now in it: *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Yet our present portion of the text is, *God is love*: but reading the whole, even now, may cast light, lustre, and majesty on the same. As I am fully persuaded I cannot fully enter into, and open the glory of the words; if I only drop a word which may lead your minds to and fix them on the words, it is all I can desire.

This sentence is a full declaration of all that God is: it is as the magnet set in steel which draws all to it: here, like the diamond in a ring, it reflects its glory on all which went before, and on all which follows after: it had been uttered at the 8th verse; but it is here expressed to add particular weight and emphasis on the subject which had

been just declared. Before, it was to express the original from whence all grace and blessings spring: here, it is to shew what God is in Himself—In his own Nature, Blessedness, and Glory. God is what He is, of Himself, and from Himself: and of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. He is Holiness itself—Glory itself—Blessedness itself. He is the ever blessed God. He is the Holy God. He is the God of Salvation: yet as though this was the only thing in God, the apostle here says of Him, *God is love*. This, God is: it is his Essence: it is his Will: it is the whole of what He is in his Being, Existence, Blessedness and Glory. This is his Perfection in the most exalted view, revelation, and display of the same, by the which he hath made himself known to his people—In Christ—In his acts of grace towards them—In his word of grace unto them—In his gifts bestowed upon them—In the relation in which he stands in unto them. This He is in his will and unchangeable purposes of his good will in Christ Jesus towards them. *God is love*. “It is,” says *Dr. Goodwin*, “the greatest thing in God. It,” says he, “commands all in God.” I suppose he means, that it hath pleased the Lord to display himself in this essential perfection of his nature to us, so as all the rest of his glorious attributes are displayed in consort with this: *we have known and believed the love that God hath to us*. *God is love*. He does not say what God was, or what God will be. He uses the present tense, *God is love*: implying God’s immutability: what God is in his Nature, that He is in his Love. So that it includes all tenses; past, present, and to come: there is no succession in it. No; from all everlasting, all through time, and the ages of eternity which are to come, it is an everlasting Now, just as the immensity of the Divine Nature is. Whilst love is essential to the Nature of God, yet God’s love wherewith He loves us, is an act of his will: it is wholly free and sovereign. And as God hath loved us from everlasting, we must have existed in Christ from everlasting: He must therefore have had Christ our eternal Head, and us as members in Him our Head, in his will, thoughts and view from before all time. It is an astonishing thought for you and me to conceive and ruminare over in our minds: that the infinite and vast mind of God, conceived such an act of love for us in his vast understanding, as will continue in Him towards us for ever: so that He might as soon cease to be, as cease to love the persons of his elect. It is an overwhelming thought, to consider, that the infinitely and ever-blessed God feeds with ineffable delight, in the reiterating in his vast mind, his own love towards us: and his views of Christ, God-Man, and of us in Him, feed and satiate the infinite mind, and, as it were, keep up the vast mind of God with increasing pleasure and delight in us. These words, *God is love*, are a most solemn assertion of the apostle, and the whole Bible bears its testimony to the Truth—In all revealed of the will of God towards Christ and the elect—In all set forth concerning the counsels and thoughts of God from everlasting—In all expressed in his giving Christ for us, and his giving Christ unto us—His sending the Holy Ghost into our hearts, and by Him, forming us for his praise—In the consummation of the glorification of the whole church in her final perfection at the last day; together with the eternal glory the church will have and enjoy in the vision of Christ, and personal communion with Him in the New Jerusalem state, and in the state of ultimate glory for ever—All this proceeds from the love of God: it therefore seems, as if

the apostle knew not what to say of all the acts of God in Christ, of all the will of God in Christ, of all the blessings of God in Christ which had been manifested to the people whom he had loved in Christ with an everlasting love, but this—*God is love.*

The love of God is wonderful in all his Persons. *Behold* (saith our apostle,) *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* It is equally as wonderful in the *Son*, that He should become *Christ* for us. It is equally as great in the co-equal and co-eternal *Spirit*, that He should become the *Comforter* of the elect. The love of God is the glory of his grace. It is free. It is absolute. It is unchangeable. It is love from everlasting. It is manifested in time, and hereby it is made known who are the objects and subjects thereof. I would fain speak, so as that our souls, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, might have an heart-refreshing sense thereof: yet I would not here go over, nor mention any particular acts, manifestations, gifts and blessings of this love; because I would avoid repetition as much as possible, and also because we have had some of these mentioned in the past Sermons. And I really view the apostle here, coming in with this his assertion as if he would hereby swallow up the whole mind with the subject, and have the saints swallowed up in God himself; who is Himself the fountain of love. He would have all the streams lead them to the fountain, God: and he would that their mind should be swallowed up in God the fountain. *God is love.* He loves your persons now, with the same love he did from everlasting. He loves you now with the same love he did, when *he so loved, as to give his only begotten Son*, to bear the sins of many, to make his soul an offering for them. *God is love.* He loves you now, with the same love He did, when he beheld Christ in his soul-travail; and beheld him purging away your sins by his bloody-sweat, and most precious oblation. He loves you now, as He did, when he sent his Holy Spirit into your hearts, to cry out *Abba, Father*; as when he sent his Holy Spirit to shed abroad a sense of his everlasting love in your hearts. He loves you now, with the same love, he will love you with in heaven, throughout the ages of eternity. *God is love.* This subject is suited for spiritual minds to contemplate on. As the spiritual mind is exercised on the same, there are blessings and benefits enjoyed by such persons, as are thus engaged, as the world can neither give, neither can it take away. Yea, the joys contained in this exercise of the spiritual mind on this most essential truth of the everlasting gospel, that *God is love*, are such, as none but the spiritual mind renewed and enlightened by the Spirit of the living God, can have the least conception of. This therefore brings me to my next particular, which is this:

3. To take notice and express the blessedness which flows into the mind of saints herefrom: it consists in this, God dwelleth in such, and such dwell in God. This is expressed in the singular number; the former was all in the plural, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.* This is the former part of the verse. Now it is, *and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* The substance of this must most assuredly concern the communion of real saints with God, and God's real communion with them, and this in the knowledge of his free communicating unto them the knowledge of his love. Yet here their communion with him is first mentioned, and

then his communion with them; *And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* So that here it is altogether personal fellowship the apostle is speaking of.

Surely none amongst the beloved of God, but will confess, the subject as it respects the saints' communion with God, in the true knowledge and belief of Him, as he hath been pleased to reveal Himself unto them in Christ, in the revelation of the everlasting gospel, is most truly glorious and divine: more especially in his love: which most certainly is the subject here. I would ask, who can unfold the mystery of real, inward, personal communion with God in his love? I cannot: yet I profess to know what it is, and wherein it consists. But whilst I can say something concerning the truth and blessedness of the same, yet it is wholly out of my power, and beyond me; it exceeds my stature and ability in Christ, to enter fully into the same. It is a personal blessing: it is a particular one: it belongs to all saints; and they each and every one of them, have their share in this high and glorious privilege; yet they all have not the same full and free enjoyment of this grace, equally and alike for themselves. According to what is expressed in our text, it is a most blessed fruit and effect, which follows on knowing and believing the love which God hath to us: *we have known and believed the love which God hath to us.* This operates on the spiritual mind: it is led out to consider what is contained, in what it is brought to know and believe of the love of God: this knowledge being quite different from a mere speculative and notional one: it is such an one as the believer by it apprehends the subject which he is enlightened into the knowledge of: it leads to an apprehension concerning the fixation of God's love on the persons of the elect—of its fixation on their persons in the Person of Christ—on the immutability of this love; by this means, the mind of a believer is led on, and led out to apprehend what is contained in this wonderful expression, *God is love.* Here he stops and makes a full pause. This, *God is love,* this fills the minds of saints, with wonder and astonishment: and it cannot but be so, as the Holy Ghost is pleased to let in upon the mind, such great and glorious conceptions of the subject, as are altogether suited to the subject itself. And together with this, the Holy Ghost is pleased to open to an individual saint, in his own mind, and enlighten into such discoveries of what is contained in these words, *God is love,* and sheds abroad in the heart of a saint, such a sense of God's love as no words ever did, or can describe. As these words, *God is love,* are the greatest, the richest, and best throughout the whole word of God, so when the Holy Ghost is pleased to let in upon the mind with them, such sense and enjoyment of the same, as are agreeable with them, the believer is filled with the profundity of grace contained therein: and he goes out in the exercise of his whole soul after God.

I consider this text, with all contained in it, the experience of a saint—of one favoured with clear knowledge and believing views of the whole mysteries of godliness: as being well grounded in the truths of the everlasting gospel; and as taught by the Divine Spirit how to walk with God and hold communion with Him, in a way of believing. And such saints are at seasons, admitted to enjoy God's love in an especial intuitive way and manner: this I conceive must be the case here, as it respects the meaning of the words before us. The apostle having said, *God is love,* he adds, *and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

What more suitable, and exactly as an inference from the assertion could have been drawn, than that such as knew and believed the love that God hath to them; that such who actually received this truth, and also what is contained in the same, would be swallowed up in their minds, in spiritual contemplations thereon: in the which they would be, as it were in God, and God would be in them: that is, they would be exercised in the knowledge and enjoyment of his love, and God himself would so possess their minds, with the enjoyment of the same, that there would be a mutual indwelling and communion of the believer with God, and of God with the believer. If the least and weakest saint in the church of God were asked, if it could be other than so, when the believer lives or is living in the apprehensions and believing views of the love of God, and taking into his own mind what the apostle here says, *God is love!* he would answer, No; it could not; nor can it be otherwise with any saint when and whilst he is thus most spiritually and divinely engaged. Let us spend a few thoughts on this, as it may lead us into right views and apprehensions of the subject before us, concerning the blessedness spoken of in these words, *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* I ask, how can this be but as follows? When the believer at any time hath his conversation in heaven, and his spiritual mind and the faculties thereof, are so swallowed up in the contemplations of this immense subject that *God is love*, and he is filled inwardly with a real sense and enjoyment of the same, what is this but fellowship with God? Surely it is. And what does this consist in? Is it not in a real dwelling in God in the real engagements and exercise of the mind on Him? And what is that in God the mind is fixed and engaged on? It is his love. So says our text, *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.* As it is the best subject for the believer to have his mind wholly and intensely engaged in, so it is the subject God himself also delights in unfolding, and refreshing the spiritual mind with renewed views and discoveries of: hence it follows, *and God dwelleth in him.* And how can this be, but by the inward and open discoveries and manifestations of his love, so as to possess the whole mind of the believer with the same? This is blessedness indeed: such as we may conceive of, and we may express somewhat of it, but we can never fully explain or utter it. The very blessedness of Heaven will consist, in God's filling and possessing the minds of his saints with the knowledge and enjoyment of his love, to the fullest extent of their capacities, and to the uttermost enjoyment of the same. I will, as I can say no more, the subject being beyond my capacity, close with the text; *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* May the Holy Ghost open to you the blessedness contained in this, in your own spiritual experiences. Amen.

## SERMON LXVIII.

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*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.—*

1 JOHN IV. 17.

THE apostle having expressed himself in the former verse, in a very effectual and influential way, on the greatest of all subjects—the Love of God to us; and uttered all he could say; for what could he more say, if he lived in our world to eternity, than he had done in these words, *God is love!* And what greater boldness could be conceived of than thus to express himself, concerning the ever-blessed and incomprehensible Essence and Existence of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; than thus to declare himself on this most incomprehensible subject, *God is love*; as if this declaration contained all in God, we ever shall need the knowledge and enjoyment of. The knowledge and effect produced in the minds of saints hereby, surpass all that can be expressed; and all is contained in these words, *He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Surely all saints will most freely confess, we want but the shine of the Holy Ghost who inspired the mind of his servant when he thus wrote, to inspire our minds, to apprehend and enjoy what is contained in that which is here so freely and fully expressed. None of us are disposed to deny this: so far from it, we most freely and truly, openly confess and acknowledge there is an infinite depth in the expression and sentence, *God is love*, and an incomprehensibility of grace in that which is herein and hereby declared; even such as can never be comprehended by the saints on earth, or by the saints in glory, even by those who are admitted, and will remain therein without the least variation, throughout the ages of eternity: *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* All this is spoken in the present tense: and what follows upon this, are the most blessed fruits and effects of the same; and even these also, are spoken of saints in this present state in the which they are in this world, and whilst they are and shall remain in it; yet most assuredly, it might have been used, to have expressed, all that ever will be known, enjoyed, and possessed by the saints in glory everlasting. There can be nothing enjoyed in the immediate presence of God in heaven, beyond his love. To know that God is love, and to dwell in Him, in the full enjoyment of the same, and for Him to dwell in us, in all the fulness of his love, this must be the very essence of eternal felicity. In connection with the past verse, the following is introduced, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* The true knowledge that *God is love*, increases and perfects our love to Him. As we enjoy the same, and in the believing apprehensions of it, the Holy Ghost produces in us the fruits and effects thereof: our love to God is hereby increased, strengthened, drawn forth, and enlarged: this is discovered, as it is

brought out into lively act and exercise towards the Lord. And as the real saint hath communion with God in his love, and God hath communion with him, revealing and manifesting the same to the mind, such an one is hereby emboldened God-ward: this is the means whereby confidence in the Lord is experimentally increased. I will cast the particulars of my present text into the following order.

1. I will very briefly shew, how our love to God is perfected, and also will aim to declare, what the meaning of these words is: *Herein is our love made perfect.*

2. I will endeavour to set before you, the fruit and effect which this produceth in us: it is this, as expressed in the text: *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.* What we are to understand by this, I will endeavour to explain.

3. The reason given and assigned for this, which is expressed in these words, *because as he is, so are we in this world*, shall be opened and explained. Of these particulars in their due form and order. May the Lord the Spirit be with me, and accompany the same with his blessing. Amen. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* I am

1. To observe and set forth very briefly, how the love of saints to God is perfected, and what the meaning of these words is, as pronounced by the apostle in the words before us. *Herein is our love made perfect.* I conceive that we must consult the former verse, and receive light therefrom, that we may the more clearly open this, as the word *Herein* which is the first word in this verse, connects itself with the former verse; which we will now do.

The words going before are these, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him:* this then follows, *Herein is our love made perfect.* Surely we must conceive thus of it—That as we, knowing and believing the love of God to us, and becoming increasingly enlightened into such gospel apprehensions and enjoyments of the same in our own spiritual minds, and have such special and personal communion with God in our hearts—this is the blssed fruit and effect that it produces within us, *Herein is our love made perfect:* it grows to its maturity. We have had the word *perfected* before, in much the same sense, in the 2nd chapter of this Epistle, verses 4 and 5. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” The meaning here, of and concerning the love of God being perfected in the mind of such an one as keepeth God’s commandments, be they either the Father’s or Christ’s, is the same as in our present text, only the causes which produce the same, and the effects are in a certain way and manner differently stated. In the one, the perfecting the love of God in the believer’s mind, is attributed to the believer’s keeping the word of God or of Christ in his remembrance: or, which is the same, the indwelling of the word of Christ in the believer’s mind. In what is here before us, the perfecting the love of God in us, is ascribed to the knowledge and belief of the love God hath to Him—That *He is love:* and also to the communion he hath with God in his love, and to the com-



munion God hath with the believer, in true and actual communion with Him. Now it is hereby our love is made perfect. In the 12th verse of this chapter, we have these words, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The meaning then to be obtained from all these passages we have mentioned, concerning the love of God being perfected in us, amounts to this, that by such and such means it comes to its maturity, that by such and such acts, this is most clearly manifested: and thus it produceth its proper effects, and is advanced to its height and utmost elevation to which it can attain, or be drawn forth in this present life. We being rooted and grounded, and settled, in the knowledge of the love of God to us, the fruits of it are accordingly evidenced in us, and by us. So that whilst we do not live upon our loving God, nor draw any of our comfort and confidence in God therefrom, but derive our all from God's love to us, yet we neither call in question God's love to us, nor our love to Him; but all this is founded and built on the Truth of the everlasting Gospel; and it is increased, maintained, strengthened, and confirmed in us, by our believing apprehensions of God's love to us; and we are hereby perfected therein in the sense that hath been expressed. Thus I have given you the best account of the first particular of my present Sermon, in my power, and according to my light into the same, and I hope it will be found acceptable unto you. I will therefore pass on to the next particular proposed, which is

2. To observe and shew, the fruit and effect which this produceth in us: that is, in such whose minds are perfected in the love of God: it is this—Such have boldness, and will have boldness in the day of judgment. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.* I shall aim to explain and set before you what we are to understand by this. And I will do so, as plainly, expressly, and with the utmost simplicity my ability will admit of; so as he who runs may read; hoping it will afford comfort to your minds, and joy to your spirits. It will be necessary to state the terms in the words before us, such as *the day of judgment, boldness in the day of judgment, who the we are, who may have boldness, as also from whence their boldness proceeds: if all this is clearly opened, then we shall have the substance of the whole text opened to our view.*

By *the day of judgment*, I understand, that day in the which God will judge the secrets of men's hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ: when he will separate the precious from the vile, saying to the one, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* and to the other, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* With respect to the word *boldness*, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, I should consider it to be the same as *Paul* uses, when he is speaking of the freedom of access saints have into the Holiest of All by the blood of Jesus. His words are, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." In the margin the word *boldness* is *liberty*: Heb. x. 19. The boldness our text speaks of, is founded on our being perfected in the love of God. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.* I must not alter the words of my text: my business is to keep close to them, and give the true meaning of them. If it be asked who the *we* are of

whom all this is spoken? The saints and beloved of God,—believers in Christ Jesus; it is of them it is said, and unto them it is spoken, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* This may be kept in view, as the outline of the whole contained in the words before us. Yet it may be asked, if I understand it thus, Are we to be bold in the day of judgment, upon the footing of any thing in ourselves? I answer, No. I further say, God forbid the thought should enter any of our minds; for this would be to overset the whole gospel. You it may be, will ask, what can be the meaning of such having *boldness in the day of judgment*, according to the words, and the outline you have given of them, if it be that this boldness at the day of judgment does not arise out of and from the saints themselves? Nay the express letter of the text amounts to this: for so we read it, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.* You yourself have suggested already, nay you have declared, this *boldness* spoken of is founded on our being *perfected in the love of God.* What can the meaning of all this be? pray explain the same, and that without perplexity: this we must request, and most earnestly desire. I in reply to this, say, this I will most assuredly do to the best of my light and ability. Then I say, the Scripture before us is very clear and plain, as it respects what is contained in it, and expressed by the same; not that it may be so to us. I cannot allow of any darkness, or ambiguity in any part of the holy Scriptures; yet I do not pretend to have equal light into all, and every one of them; if I did, I should deceive myself, and you also. Yet this is an immutable truth, there is no darkness in the word of revelation: our not comprehending it, this arises from the darkness which is inherent in ourselves. This passage before us, is not unlike that which I am going to quote; the whole of which is this, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” chap. iii. 18—21. What can we make of all this, unless we examine the context; I mean expressly these terms and expressions in the same, *knowing the Truth—knowing that we are of the truth—assuring our hearts before God—our hearts condemning us—our hearts not condemning us.* And if they do not, it is then asserted, *Then have we confidence toward God.* I ask, Does our faith in Christ, our confidence in Christ, our hearts not condemning us, are any of these, or all these together, any part of our salvation? Does our union, interest, and safety in Christ depend on any of these? Does our state in Christ, and before God, depend in the least manner and measure on any of these? Most assuredly they do not. Yet it must be acknowledged, there must be a subject of importance in all these as expressed by our apostle; because he wrote all this under the infallible guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost, which I have shewed when we were on these verses which I have quoted and here refer to, when we were on these words, in going through this comment. I then, and there observed the subject the apostle was upon, concerned brotherly love: or, loving such, or not loving such for Christ’s sake—That to love the Lord’s beloved ones in deed and in

truth, was an evidence both internally, and externally, that such and such knew Him, who is Truth itself, who said, *love one another; as I have loved you.*

The apostle says, speaking of himself, and others also, for if our hearts condemned us, as not loving this, God is greater than our hearts and he knoweth all things. If we loved the brethren, then we could assure, or persuade, for so it is in the margin, our hearts before Him: Of what? That we really loved the saints with whom we conversed, for His sake. If this was not the case, then when we engaged in secret, social, and public prayer, and professed to pray for such and such, as a part of the family of heaven, our hearts could not but condemn us, we being inwardly conscious we did not inwardly and sincerely love them as such. Whereas, if our hearts, says the apostle, do not condemn us of want of real love in Christ to those who are Christ's, but that we pray for them out of the love of our hearts unto them for the Lord's sake; that we as sincerely pray for them, with real warmth and spiritual affection of soul and with the same importunity we do for ourselves, and also for the blessings and graces those we present at the throne need, and that the Lord would be unto them, as we would He should be unto us, in such like cases, then have we confidence toward God. Not a confidence in the Lord respecting his being our God and Father, our Saviour, Righteousness, Atonement, our Advocate, our Judge,—of his being our Sanctifier, Portion, Treasure, and Inheritance; but an assurance that we are so far right in the particulars which have been expressed and stated. Thus these saints are spoken to and excited to go on doing good unto the brethren, praying for them and on their behalf with increasing spiritual pleasure and delight. This contains my full interpretation of the passage, and which I conceive to be a very just one. And so as it respects the passage now before us, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*: as I cannot conceive we shall be bold in the day of judgment, on the footing of any thing wrought in us or done by us, so I cannot but consider it to be absolutely necessary for us to attend very closely to the context: and thereby with the Lord's own light and blessing, we shall be guided into the right knowledge and meaning of that which is contained in these words, which are now most particularly before me, which is this particular clause of the text, *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*. That is, says one, by dwelling in spiritual meditations on the love of God to us, hereby we shall appear with holy boldness before Him, even Jesus Christ our Lord: because as he was full of love during the whole of his being and continuance in an incarnate state, so it becomes all the saints to be full of love towards each other and loving in their conversation, all the season they endure in this mortal state. This is not amiss, and may very well serve to be attended unto, as casting a general idea upon the whole of this verse: as it also doth on the particular clause we are upon; as it brings in Christ, as He with whom our great concern will be in the day of judgment: and that He is here alluded unto in these words, *because as he is*, (which none can deny, but must belong to Him) *so are we in this world*. This concerns our third particular, therefore we shall not take it up now; but shall dismiss all which concerns this to its proper place; and go on to give fuller light into these words, *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*. It is by faith we live on Christ. It is by faith we

live to the honour and glory of Christ: by our living in lively apprehensions of God's love to us in his dear Son, *Herein is our love made perfect.* Or, as it is in the margin, *Herein is love with us perfected* one towards another. And this encourageth our minds, to expect to appear before our Lord Jesus Christ with confidence before His Majesty, in the solemn and awful day of judgment. The word *boldness*, as hath been suggested, is the same with the word *liberty*: it must therefore have for its meaning here, and be in part designed to set forth the holy and free access of saints to Christ on that solemnity. We have something not unlike to this and which, it may be, may cast some light hereon; the apostle in the 2nd chapter, and 28th verse of this Epistle, exhorts the saints thus, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

This confidence must consist, agreeable with the exhortation, in that these persons by their abiding firm and stedfast in the truths of the everlasting gospel, and not yielding to the many antichrists and antichristian doctrine which then abounded—the apostle would have confidence respecting the truth of their faith, nor be ashamed at Christ's coming, as if he had bestowed on them labour in vain. What by the coming of Christ may be considered as there meant, is in that Sermon there set before you: in that verse the confidence expressed, is a confidence in the saints—In their faith and perseverance. The boldness or liberty of saints in the day of judgment, is the effect of their being perfected in the knowledge of God's love, so as to express themselves accordingly. It is here expressed by way of encouragement: it most certainly implies a liberty and holy freedom and access saints will have with our Lord Jesus Christ at the day of judgment: and this boldness and freedom of access to him, with the liberty which they enjoy at that solemn period, arises from themselves. The apostle is not speaking here of their persons, he is here speaking of the state of their minds. To prove this let us again recite, and renew the words, all of them. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* The love of God being most freely opened unto us: our minds being opened to receive true and free apprehensions of the same; we enjoy the sense of this in our own souls. This as realized in us, and unto us, takes off our minds from all legal fears and suspicions of the love of God to us; so that we draw nigh to God in Christ, now, and the majesty of God does not perplex our minds, so as to make us in the least afraid to approach Him. So as we increase in our knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are not burthened in our spirits, with dread that we must appear before Him at his coming, and be with Him in the judgment day. We are fortified in our minds and prepared for all this, *because as he is, so are we in this world.* And this brings me to my last particular; which is this,

3. To speak of the reason given and assigned, for this boldness of the saints in the day of judgment: *because as he is, so are we in this world. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

In the former words, I understood the love of the Holy Trinity as contained in these expressions, *God is love*: which seems to me in all the

former verses, as most divinely, particularly, and Personally, and more immediately attributed to the Father. And it is, and must be so, because his love is spoken of as manifested in so loving as to send his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. At verse 13th, the Holy Spirit is mentioned, as also his being given unto us, which according to the context must be from the Father. The words are, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* Then two verses after, we read thus: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* And this is so contained, I mean the Person of Christ, and so involved in what is expressed thus, *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,* that it breaks out in the words before us; for most certainly it is the Person of Christ who is spoken of in the last clause of my present text. Judge for yourselves if it be not so, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* The *he is*, must of necessity be *Christ*: and it is what respects our having liberty, or, free access to him, which is the subject: as also how it is we have boldness with Him in the day of judgment: the reason given for it is, *because as he is, so are we in this world.* I conceive this is an invincible evidence that Christ must be understood here, because he is the Judge at the last day. All the concerns of that day are committed unto Him: and this is according to the dispensatory acts of the Divine Father, "Who judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," as our Lord himself speaks, John v. 22. And the apostle *Paul* speaks the same: "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;" that is by God-Man, Christ Jesus. see Acts xvii. 31. Now it is by a lively apprehension of God's love, saints are emboldened and kept up, and carried above the terrors of the judgment to come. As they in their own minds bear the image of Christ, and being fully persuaded they shall then shall then bear the image of Him, the second Adam, by having their vile bodies made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself; the belief and views they have hereof, carried them out in heart and hope after him, so as they have boldness in their free accesses unto Him, even in the prospects of that day. Saints have their anticipations of the second coming of their Lord. They have from the word, some spiritual conceptions of the Majesty, Glory, and Splendour, in the which our Lord will then shine forth: yet as they are admitted into an holy familiarity with Him and have free and most holy liberty in real communion now; so He their Lord and Saviour being then to be their Judge, they even then expect, he will be as truly their friend, when he is their Judge, as he hath been their Saviour now. Also the consideration, *because as he is, so are they in this world*: He was once in the world, on their behalf, and for their salvation: He was then the object of the Father's everlasting love, so were they in Him: He was then accepted by the Divine Father, and their acceptance was in Him: He was then Jehovah their righteousness, and they are in Him righteous: yea, they are made the righteousness of God in Him. Such considerations as these, may well lift up the minds of saints to Him; and also

lift up their hearts beyond all fears and dread of the day of judgment. It may serve to let in upon them, a most blessed conception of the liberty they will then be admitted into with their dear Lord: even then, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. i. 10. As I have as well as I could, given you all the light on the words which was in my power, I will conclude with the apostle's prayer on the behalf of the saints at *Thessalonica*, which runs in these words: *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ:* to the which I add my most hearty Amen.

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## S E R M O N L X I X .

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*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.—*

I JOHN IV. 18.

IT hath been for the substance of it, that the love of God hath been in a very particular manner, the subject the apostle hath been engaged on, in very many of the past verses. And most assuredly the love of the Holy blessed and glorious Trinity, to the elect of *Adam's* posterity, who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, is the first and great leading truth, we, as the church of Christ are and should be concerned with. As the knowledge and belief of God's love, and Christ's salvation, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, bring these subjects into our minds, and make way for them to be realized therein, so thereby the effects of the same are produced. It is the means of perfecting in us, an assurance of the love of God to us: this leads to a more simple, clear, convincing evidence of our interest in the same. Hereby we are led to seek to keep up fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in open, free, and spiritual communion with them, in our love to them, faith in them, agreeable to what we have been enlightened from the word, and by the Spirit, to apprehend concerning this great and most important subject—Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; so the apostle sets before us the blessings and benefits which accompany this: saying, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* Christ was all love to his beloved whilst in our world. He is so now in heaven. We, so far as influenced with the knowledge of his love to us, are full of love one to another for his sake. We have free access to Him now: this is all of grace. We come before Him, and the Divine

Majesty in the Person of the Father now, in his Name, Person, Holiness, Righteousness and Sacrifice, as perfect in Him, as we shall at the day of judgment. So that we are now in this world, in Him, what we shall openly appear to be before Him in the great day of his appearing. We are as truly accepted in Him by the Father, as He is.—As truly righteous in the sight of our heavenly Father, in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour, as we shall be in Heaven throughout the ages of eternity. We are as completely washed, and justified, and sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, as ever we shall be. As we are favoured with believing views of all contained herein, so our minds are spiritualized, and so simplified that we grow into an holy boldness, liberty and freedom with our blessed Lord. We have no doubts concerning his love to us: therefore our views of the judgment of the great day, do not take off our confidence in Him: it rather increases the same. The apostle subjoins these words to the former, by way of explanation; *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* I shall endeavour to open these words under the following particulars.

1. Here is a positive assertion, which is this, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.*

2. The reason given why it is so: *because fear hath torment*: consequently there cannot be perfect love, where the mind is so left as to be tormented with fear concerning our state, or that which is the proper accompanying effect thereof. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.*

3. The conclusion of this, with the inference the apostle draws from it; which is this; *He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* These are the particulars of the text, and having given you how I shall treat them, to the intent I may open and explain them, I proceed: and

1. I am to observe, here is a positive assertion, which is this; *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.*

As the text itself stands in connection with the former verse, the meaning is very simple, clear, and plain. The former words shall therefore be quoted and read together with our present verse, then I conceive we are most likely to have the true meaning of the same. The words in both are as follows, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* I ask if this which follows does not appear to be the meaning of the same? That the mind of saints, enlightened and established in the doctrine of God's everlasting love, and having the enjoyment of the same, in their looking unto and living in real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, as influenced and taught so to do by the Holy Ghost, are hereby free from all condemnation. They know whose they are, and what their state in Christ is. They do not call in question the love of the Holy Trinity unto them. They have no fear in their minds, nor do they entertain any suspicions concerning the eternal fixation of it on their persons: therefore have a real enjoyment of that which is contained in all this; they have no fear and doubt in their minds, concerning their union to Christ, interest in Him, and boldness, liberty and freedom with Him

in the day of his glorious appearing, in his kingdom and glory; but are perfectly satisfied in their own minds, they cannot be condemned, because there is even now, no condemnation to such as are in Christ Jesus. I ask you, men, brethren, and fathers in Christ, if there can be a more plain and simple opening of these words, than this here given? And I also ask you, if it does not include all which can be conceived as contained therein? If you agree with me herein, and if I have given you satisfaction in the statement expressed and set before you, I shall therein most heartily rejoice. There can be no cause for fear of any one condemnation, by any of those who have their hearts established in the love of God: where there is a true and right apprehension of the love of God in Christ, there can be no fear about it. So that this is a positive truth, and therefore it is here most positively asserted in the words before us; *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear*: it is impossible but it should. Confidence and its contrary, which is diffidence, are opposites, and contrary one to the other. There is nothing in the words to distress the weakest in the flock of God: but there is that in them, which cannot in its own nature, but be useful to the whole family and children of God: it being evident by all which goes before, that such as are the Lord's cannot entertain too free, generous thoughts of God's love in their minds; and also that they ought not to think of God's love, and exercise their thoughts on this vast subject, but as it is revealed and set forth in the scriptures of truth. We are all of us too prone to conceive of God's love to us, by what we feel and experience in ourselves of the same. It is most truly blessed to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Yet as this depends on the good pleasure of God's will, we are not confirmed and established in the knowledge and belief of God's love hereby, as we are in receiving into our minds the revealed account of the same: which when we have done, then this shedding abroad a sense of it in our hearts, serves to lead us in the experience of this rich grace to enter more and more, into clear discoveries and right conceptions of the variety of ways and means, whereby the Lord leads us into such heart-affecting and soul-animating views thereof, as enlarge our hearts towards the Lord, and towards one another for his sake. It all serves to prove the reality of God's love; and our minds are so fully satisfied that God is love—that he hath fully manifested the truth of this in Christ, and that He hath also realized this in us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost who hath created in us such blessed conceptions of the love of God to us, in Christ, as neither inward sin, no, nor world, the devil, death, nor hell, can ever eradicate therefrom—this puts an end to all legal and self-righteous fear. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.*

I might here observe what a blessing it is for any of us so to be favoured with such a true knowledge of the love of God in Christ Jesus, as to apprehend and receive the doctrine thereof into our minds: when it is thus with any of us, we no longer are subject to doubts and fears concerning it; for as we receive the doctrine as the revelation of God, and believe the truth of it on his own authority, we neither believe more concerning it one time than we do another. Our confidence is not built on our enjoyment and experience of it; but upon the clear and stated revelation of the same. We believe the same concerning it when we have



not the least sensible enjoyment of it, as we do when we have. Yet when we are favoured with the enjoyment of it, and have communion with God therein, we then have full evidence and confirmation that what we have received into our minds from the scriptures concerning the everlasting love of God, is altogether equal in truth to our understandings, to what we at such seasons enjoy in our hearts. This leads out our hearts to love God for his great love to us in Christ, and this to such an extent as to exclude all fear. We do not love him equal with his love to us. No; that is everlastingly impossible: yet we so love Him, as to love Him in his saints: and this is one subject the apostle has had in his eye for a long season; and this as the issue of this present subject, will he bring us unto, before he hath closed this present chapter. He had before, at the 11th and 12th verses said, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* And this subject is again glanced at in these words also: *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* Surely this must result as a very just and intended inference herefrom—That as Christ is full of love, so are we to be in the free and full exercise thereof towards each other for his sake; we cannot love God so as to testify our love to Him, except there be objects on whom we may express the same towards Him, any otherwise than God can love, without having objects to express and exercise his love upon: which we say, is Christ God-Man, and the elect in Him. And we who have known and believed the love which God hath to us, as we cannot express our love to God immediately but by mental acts, so our love to God, and Jesus Christ, for their great love and kindness unto us, cannot be outwardly expressed but towards his saints; He not being visibly present with and before us, so as that we can openly express it unto Him. His beloved are the objects and subjects of our love, for his sake. It is not in our power to give an outward evidence and testimony of our love to Him, but by our expressions of the same towards them. He was full of love to us: our Lord Jesus Christ was all this to us, all the time he continued in this our world: we, as his beloved, ought to be all love, one towards another, and in our carriage, all the while we remain in this present mortal state. *Because as he is, so are we in this world.* In such as this love one to another, is so powerful and operative, they are carried above all misgivings, of being when they appear before Christ in the day of judgment, censurable, or condemned in their own minds, of not being as of one heart and soul in love and affection, towards such and such, as were brethren in the same faith with them, whilst they were in a present time state. So that in this treatment of our subject, the truth of the apostle's assertion is just, and equally confirmed, as in the former illustration, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.* There is no fear of condemnation: nay, there is no doubt of our real and holy love to the brethren in our own minds, for *perfect love casteth out fear*, and it causeth us to cease from all suspicions concerning the same. Thus our assurance of the love of God to us, increases our love to God, and the brethren. We are hereby saved from all slavish fear: we have no terrifying thoughts of the day of judgment: we look forward unto it with boldness. Our love being made perfect in the knowledge we have of the

love of God to us, all fears are removed from our minds. So that what follows in the three next verses, respecting our love to God and the brethren falls into its right and proper place; *We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.*

I have before aimed, and do here again, aim to sum up the whole subject, and its coherency together, merely that all might appear at one general view, and each and every part of the subject thus most fully appear. And as this gives a just outline of what remains before us in the remainder of this chapter, so I close the first head of this discourse, contained in the first particular of the same, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear*, thus. To the best of my ability, I would unite the whole of the subject of the foregoing verses, and those which follow, into this as the real substance of them—That the apostle aims throughout the whole, to draw out our love to God, from what he says of God's great and wonderful love to us, in Christ; and from the views and apprehensions of the same, He aims to excite and draw out our love to each other for the Lord's sake. And our love to each other, being perfected, confirmed and settled, and grown to spiritual maturity, by our knowledge of God's love to us in his dear Son, and this sealed home upon our hearts, by the Divine testimony of the Holy Spirit, casts out all guilty and servile fears: so that we have no doubts or suspicions concerning God's love to us, or our love to each other for his sake. Thus *there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear*. This brings me to my next particular; which is this,

2. The reason given in my text why it is so, *Because fear hath torment*. The former part of the text containing a positive assertion, is, as it were, here replied unto; or a reason is here assigned how it is so: *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment*.

To love and not to be loved again; or not to love, and yet be beloved in return for the same; in both cases, it is so far from being satisfactory to the mind, that in both these instances there is a kind of jealousy and tormenting fear, which is a source of great uneasiness. It is a torment, and it serves to increase tormenting grief, which hath its sad effect upon the spirits, which more or less disquiets the frame. As on the contrary, a full and free believing apprehension and sense of God's love to us, in our most blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and true and stedfast faith acted and exercised on Him, removes from our hearts, through the gracious testimony of the Holy Spirit, all fears, mis-givings and suspicions: so that we being fully persuaded hereof, enjoy perfect tranquillity. In like manner, we from hence, loving the brethren of Christ and ours in Him, from a sense of his love to us and them, and exercising the same by all ways and means in our power for so doing, we are fully persuaded and fully ascertained of our love to them. So that in this sense also, *perfect love casteth out fear*, and we are hereby saved from the same: and thus *love casteth out fear*; and this is the reason of it, *because fear hath torment*. Suspicion is the very bane of friendship: let it be natural, social, personal, or spiritual. It is most base, when such

as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are left so to themselves as to exercise their minds in suspecting the friendship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet unbelief, and every act of it, contains this in the same, as the very root of it. We should remember love is the only bond of friendship: it is so as it respects our Divine Lord. He loveth at all times: it is immutable. The instances which he hath given, of the great love wherewith he loved us before all time, and which he gave full proof of in the fulness of time, in his incarnation, life, and death, and which we are called to the frequent remembrance of, and to shew forth and make a public acknowledgment of, in our attendance on the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are such all-sufficient witnesses of his love towards us, and of the present and perpetual continuation of it now and for evermore, as forbid all doubts and suspicions concerning it. Yet, I fear if, on real examination, it be not found one of the chiefest sins amongst even those whom we call the household and family of faith. The knowledge and belief of God's love to us in Christ Jesus, is the very means of our loving God in Christ. And so it is as it respects our love to Christ, as our fast and faithful friend; it can only be confirmed in our minds by the Holy Ghost, and as he is pleased to create in our minds gospel views and apprehensions of the same. It is from hence of course, our love to one another is so kept up and spiritually maintained, as excludes all suspicions, as excludes all fear; *because fear hath torment*. Which where it is, and as long as it is in the mind, it creates and continues perplexity and torment: which nothing but perfect love can cast out, and get above the power and influence of the same. If we consider tormenting fear, be it about our state in Christ, or of the state of our minds concerning our love to one another for and towards and for the sake of the Person, grace, and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ; or let it be about that which is the proper accompanying effect thereof; until we come to some settled judgment concerning the subjects, we cannot be free from tormenting fear. There is therefore an absolute necessity for us to be so instructed in the knowledge of the Love of the Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, in the Person of Christ, God-Man, towards us, as may perfect or complete our love to God our heavenly Father, to Christ our most dear Lord and only Saviour, and regarding our union, interest, and relation to and in Him, as may establish our minds beyond all doubts and suspicions whatsoever. I think it is needless to repeat, that by *perfect love*, even that love spoken of here, is to be understood such a true knowledge of the love of God to us, as casts out and removes all guilty, servile, legal, unbelieving fears and suspicions: so as that the mind being set at true and gospel liberty, we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, serve the Lord in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life. Thus, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment*. This then brings me unto my next particular, which is this;

3. The apostle's conclusion of all this, with his own inference from it, which is this; *He that feareth is not made perfect in love*: which is so just, that it must be very evident to all minds, who do but recollect the words which went before. To the intent it may be as clear to us, as it is set forth in the text, I will again recite it: *There is no fear in love*;

*but perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

It is for our use and benefit, that these words are retained in the Bible ; as truly so, as it was for theirs who lived in the age when they were first written. The original from whence every good and perfect gift cometh is the everlasting love of God : which having been transcendently displayed in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his mission and salvation ; and made known to the minds of believers in Him, through the grace, and revelation of the same, to the hearts of God's people, by the Holy Ghost given unto them—they hereby have such a real enjoyment of the same in their souls, as produces all sorts of gracious effects. This is the substance of the whole of this Epistle, in and throughout every part and particular of it, when it treats of such and such graces, as those who are true believers are actually possessed of. It is not the design of the Holy Ghost to take the eye of the mind off views of the love of God, our heavenly Father to our persons, in the Lord Jesus Christ : this can by no means be allowed of. If it be said, these fruits and effects are mentioned and so expressly dwelt upon, that we may not deceive ourselves and think we are the Lord's, unless we have, and are the subjects of these gracious evidences thereof, even this I cannot wholly assent and consent unto. Neither do I assent and consent to deny, but that these gracious effects of what the Lord hath done in our souls, are proofs of God's dwelling in us by his Spirit, and that he hath formed us, by his grace, as a people to himself, to shew forth his praise. Yet I conceive all our mistakes concerning such subjects as are here before us, are occasioned by want of our duly considering that we are in every sense passive under all the operations of the Holy Ghost within us and upon us. And it were well if we considered this : we should then find it a key to unlock and open a variety of scriptures to our mind, so as we should be led to a right apprehension of the same, and not be so much puzzled and perplexed with many sentences and expressions in the word of God, as we frequently are. If we are in the hand of the Spirit of God, under the whole work of grace, and if it be Himself who produces every gracious fruit and effect within us and by us, in the outward, visible, and open evidence of the same, then this Sacred Agent must lead the renewed mind to right, clear, and spiritual apprehensions of those objects and subjects, on the which our spiritual mind, faculties, and senses, are and must be exercised, that such and such graces may be drawn out and exercised on those objects and subjects : which, as they are, such and such fruits, effects, and evidences of grace, cannot but follow. I think this is as clear as light from the sun : and a real apprehension of the same would reflect glorious light on every part of this Epistle, and most especially on such parts of it, as these now before us.

I do not profess myself to be an adept in divinity : all I aim at is to cast light on some parts of what is connected with sound divinity, and if the Lord please, to set the same in such a point of view as that the one part may not clash with the other. And I may here venture to say, at present, there is a greater darkness on the minds of ministers, and I might include with them, the churches too, concerning the work of the Spirit of God in the souls of the called of God, and concerning the

sanctification of the Spirit, and what gospel-sanctification is, and wherein it consists, and what are the genuine fruits and effects of the same, and how they are produced in the spiritual mind, and are manifested and exemplified in life and conversations—There is an awful darkness on the minds even of the elect, on these subjects: and there is a perverse spirit, and certain prejudices crept into the minds of many professing christians, so that if there be any thing said on these subjects by way of explanation, which is not exactly agreeable to their own notions, they reject it. They cry it down as error: they will raise an alarm: so that instead of loving as brethren, they sometimes speak and reject, persecute and withstand Truth in the real friends of Christ; and all because they are not for having Truth, God's Truth, in all its articles, and throughout all its bearings, searched into. I do not like to be harsh; yet I think it becomes me here to say, in the words of the apostle *Paul*, *if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant*: as it argues very little valuation of Truth, not to be desirous to have clear light into it. I do not mean, we are to follow any man, so as to reject the teachings of the Holy Spirit, neither are we too fond of any new explanations of scripture, lest by the same we receive a doctrine of man's invention; yet most certainly it must be most truly desirable to understand the true doctrine of gospel-sanctification, and the mind and will of the Lord our God therein: and this cannot be, but by receiving the true knowledge of the same. And the right apprehension thereof, is the best and truest key to open all the difficulties of this Epistle. I do not mean there are any in it, but I confess there may appear such to some. Yet the true and scriptural knowledge of the Holy Trinity, and of their acts and operations of grace, for, upon and within the elect, is the best means whereby we may divide aright this word of Truth, and leave no part of the same without its use and meaning, nor without its weight and authority. The true knowledge of God in the word of Truth, is a great part of God's workmanship upon the soul. The right apprehension of Truth in all its branches is, in the hand of the Spirit, the means of setting the mind at perfect liberty: it frees it from all sorts and kinds of bondage. True communion with God, in the knowledge and enjoyment of his love, draws out our love in acts and exercise towards Him, and to each other for his sake. It is by this means our love grows to a maturity, so as to be confidential that we are the objects and subjects of his everlasting love. Hereby all fear is cast out: all suspicions are removed. We are not afraid to contemplate the love of God to us, as we are one in Christ, and with Christ, and are in Christ the objects and subjects of all the love wherewith he hath loved Christ, and us, from everlasting. We know that he that feareth, though he may be the beloved of God, yet such an one is not made perfect in love, at present; neither is his knowledge of God, his faith in God, his enjoyment of the love of God, his communion with God in the blessings of his love such; he is not led by the Holy Spirit, into such clear and apprehensive views of this vast and unspeakable subject, as lead him to glorify the Lord, and joy and rejoice in Him and before Him, with such a confidence as admits of no doubting. Such an one for the present does not see and understand his whole salvation is entirely independent of himself—That his life in Christ, his being and well-being in Christ, his acceptance in Christ, his blessedness in Christ, his everlasting life and glorification in Christ, is not fixed on any thing within him, or without him, but

it is all his, and all contained in all this, is in him, by the immutable will of God. Now such as may be styled grown christians have such views of this, and have been favoured with such views of God's love to them, in real communion with him, as have been the means, whereby the Holy Spirit hath realized all these truths to their minds, so as for them to be fully established and confirmed in the same. Hereby all fear is cast out of the mind: they are freed from the torment thereof. Such saints can and do feel for such as are not in the same blessed case with themselves. They pray for them: they compassionate them: they communicate their experiences and enjoyments unto them: they express all they can from the scriptures of Truth, hoping their minds may be improved thereby. Yet they cannot say of such, that they enjoy the same blessings in their own souls as they themselves do, and the reason is, because they have their doubts and suspicions of the love of God to them: and these are *remoras* and hindrances to their taking the blessings of God's love and Christ's salvation to themselves. So that he who feareth, is not made perfect in love. Thus I have endeavoured to set before you the text, with all the clearness I possibly could. May the Lord shine and bless you with the true and clear knowledge of the same. Amen.

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## SERMON LXX.

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*We love him, because he first loved us.*—1 JOHN IV. 19.

THE apostle in the verses preceding those in the words before us, had been expressing and setting forth the love of God to us, in its originality, with all its gracious fruits and effects on us, and as it respected the goodness contained therein, as we were and are the partakers of the same. He then, as agreeable with his own design, shews how the subject must, and cannot but work, and influence the spiritual mind, and produce its proper effects on and within the same. If God's everlasting love to us, proceeding from the free, sovereign good pleasure of his will, hath been so expressed and displayed, as for Him to give his only begotten Son, to be our Saviour, Sacrifice, Salvation, our present and everlasting Portion;—and also in giving his Holy Spirit, to dwell in us, and for him to reveal Christ, with all his great salvation to our minds, so as for us to receive and enjoy the same, and have free and real communion with the Father, in all the consolations of his everlasting love in our hearts, and with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in his complete salvation, in a real participation of all the blessings and benefits thereof; as also seeing that in connection with all this, it is evident the Holy Ghost dwells in us to engage our hearts, from the knowledge he hath given us of these inestimable verities, to love God for his great love to us! what can be more suited to all this, than that such should be free from all perplexing and slavish fear? He having been on this subject so

long, it having been in the nature of it all-sufficient to warm their hearts, he expresses the effects the true knowledge, sense, feeling, and experience all this love of the Divine Persons has on us; and the influence the same hath within us: *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* So far then as we live in the real belief of the love of God to us, of Christ being the propitiation for our sins, we see we have every reason to be bold in the day of judgment, because we are in Christ: and there is no one condemnation in the court of heaven against us. We know that we are passed from death unto life. We have no terrifying thoughts of Christ, as though he were our enemy: and the more assuring confirmation we receive into our minds of the Father's love to us, in his beloved Son, and of his complete and everlastingly finished salvation, all fear of a slavish sort and kind is removed from us. And our love to God, is the fruit and effect of his love to us: *We love him, because he first loved us.* Our love to God is kindled by, and is the fruit and effect of his free love to us: this was in his heart from everlasting: it is set before us in his gracious and eternal purposes in Christ concerning us. This is now, whilst we are in a time state, expressed by the declarations of his grace, and by the full and clear revelation of Christ in the everlasting gospel. This is antecedent to our believing: it is therefore the cause of all our love to him. And our love to Him is necessarily connected, with real love to all his children; so that in these words, we have our love to God described in its causes, nature, and effects. *We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.* Thus we have all before us, which remains in this chapter. Not that I am going to enter on the same. No: I shall confine myself to the present text, and open the other two following verses, distinctly, and in their proper order. My text here before me, *We love him, because he first loved us*, contains these following particulars. Here is

1. A solemn assertion, made by the apostle in his own name and that of others, concerning their love to God: *We love him.* The *him* may refer to Christ: He being the Person spoken of in the context which immediately precedes my text; *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* Or, it may be, it refers to the Divine Majesty in the Father: this shall be enquired into. The

2nd particular of the text is: the reason assigned for our love to God, which is this; *Because he first loved us. We love him, because he first loved us.* To begin with the first clause in the text, *We love him.* This contains

1. A solemn assertion of the apostle, in his own name, and that of others, concerning his, and their love to God: in the which most undoubtedly, there are a variety of particulars included, and the which I will endeavour to express in this present head of discourse, and with

a design to open these words in their true and proper meaning to you :  
*We love him.*

The word *We* must of necessity take in and comprehend the apostles, and together with them are believers and saints ; for this reason, because the Truth that is here expressed concerns and belongs to them all : therefore the solemn assertion is made in all their names. It was expressed for the apostles, and they are the *we* in the 14th verse of this chapter, where we read, “ And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world.” It is expressed for all the saints, the *we*, in the 16th verse, and the apostles are there included also : *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him :* so it is likewise in the following verses ; *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment : He that feareth is not made perfect in love :* so it is here ; *We love him, because he first loved us.* The word *We* includes and comprehends all saints : but it may be asked, Who is the *him* we love ? I reply, according to the major part of the context, I should conclude it is the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, whose love the apostle had most abundantly dwelt upon, and set forth in a very glorious and demonstrative manner, and given such transcendent instances and evidences of. And no doubt but the Father, even He whom our Lord Jesus Christ himself styles *God the Father*, John vi. 27, is to be included and understood. Yet the immediate coherency of these words, may also direct our minds to Christ, as the Person particularly designed. *He* is no doubt the immediate antecedent : this I conceive you may see for yourselves, by looking back to these words, *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world.* Now from hence I conclude our Lord Jesus Christ is the *him* in our present text. *We love him.* We cannot but love Him. He is the immediate object of our faith and love. It may be that it is on this account, he is here set before us : because it is by Him we know the Father : it is in Him we love the Father : it is through his most gracious mediation, we have access, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, in all our acts of spiritual worship unto the Father. Yet I conceive it will be most right to comprehend both the Father and the Son, this being an eternal truth, that we cannot love the Son if we do not love the Father ; neither can we love the Father and the Son but by the Holy Spirit ; it being He alone who begets love in our renewed minds, both to the Father and the Son, as he is pleased to make known and reveal their love to us. We may also add, there is the same obligation for our loving the Father as for loving the Son : and in our loving the one, we express our love to the other.

I conceive what I have thus expressed, is for the subject and substance of it, the same as is here contained in the scripture before us, *We love him.* This may be considered as including the whole Three Persons in the infinite and incomprehensible Essence, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as they each and every one of them, according to their Personal Existence in the Godhead, and also according to their economy in the dispensation of their grace, have made such a mutual display of their loves to the persons of the elect, the Father in election, the Son in salva-



tion, the Spirit in regeneration and consolation, as that taking the subject in its comprehensive view, there is the uttermost revelation and manifestation made of the exceeding riches of Divine grace. All this is most clearly and expressly recorded in the word of truth; but we cannot fully comprehend it by faith, any more than we can fully understand it in Glory: yet we so far have that knowledge of it, as leads us to say, *We love him, because he first loved us.* Or, these words, *We love him,* may more immediately refer to the Persons of the Father and the Son—To the Father; whose love is spoken of in the scriptures, and throughout the whole of them, as the fountain cause of all grace and glory, as bestowed upon us, and promised us in Christ: and which shines forth in the Person of Christ, God-Man, in the fullest and uttermost manifestation of the same, on us, so as that we receive into our spiritual minds the most clear and heart-warming apprehensions thereof, have it realized in us, and this by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is hereby we have the most blessed and clear evidence of our personal interest in the Divine favour, we possibly can have. And as Christ is the first and most immediate object of our faith and love, so He may be considered as the *him* in the text; *We love him.* He being the glorious Mediator, by whom we draw nigh unto God; and it is in the knowledge and acknowledgment of Him, the love of the Father is brought into our minds, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. The words before us, *We love him,* they contain a declaration, which not only suited the apostle's mouth, and all those that he spake for, but it suits the lips of all saints also. Every one who has been taught of God, who has been led into the spiritual knowledge and apprehension of the Father's love, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ to them, can say, yea, they do say, for themselves individually, *We love him, because he first loved us.*

In the act of the Holy Ghost, when he first begets eternal life in our minds, he creates such ideas and thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ within us, so as they are discovered by our faith on Him, and love to Him: yet as the great and most truly excellent *Dr. Gill* says, *which* is first discovered in the soul, whether it be faith, or love, is not easy to say. I am very confident it must be a very difficult thing to express the operations of the Holy Spirit, in his work on the souls of the elect in regeneration, and in what follows thereupon: yet it seems to me, love to Christ is more generally discovered, than faith. They are one and the same fruits and effects of being born again; yet if we attend to such as are but newly brought to the knowledge of the Lord, we shall be constrained to acknowledge their love to Christ appear more predominant than their faith in Christ: therefore we for the general hear them say individually, "I love the Lord:" and collectively, "we love the Lord." And as Christ is the first object of their faith and love, and his mediation is the medium whereby they are by degrees, through the teachings of the Holy Spirit, led into clear and distinct apprehensions of the Father's love, in the gift of his Son, so I should for my own part, conclude Christ is in a very special way to be regarded here, in these words, *We love him, because he first loved us.* It appears to me quite suited to all which goes before, and stands connected with our text: not but that the Father is included, He being *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named:* the children of God, have in themselves good grounds for saying, *We love him,*

*because he first loved us* : for this love had been made known to those the apostle wrote unto : it is as truly made known to all saints now, and will be in all generations to come, as it ever yet was. And all such as are born of the Spirit, have inward experience, enjoyments, and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the blessings and benefits thereof : all which is their case, because they have been beloved by all the Persons of the Trinity with an everlasting love ; and they have been led, from the scriptures of truth, to conceive and receive from the same, right views and impressions thereof, through the inspiration of the Lord the Spirit. All God's love centres in Christ : the elect are in Him : all the love of God is reflected on them in the Person and salvation of Christ, and this is the very reason why they are so disposed, in all their acts of faith, and in every access of theirs to the Divine Majesty, to deal so immediately with Jesus, their Lord and Saviour. And for the same reason I am inclined to consider Christ, as the Person here most immediately intended ; not to the exclusion of the Father, whose love had been so gloriously expressed and set forth, in all the former context : in whose love the saints dwell most happy and truly blessed, in their spiritual contemplations on the same : by which means their love to God, and to saints, is perfected, that is, grown to such maturity, as to exclude all doubting, and tormenting fear. It is here Christ comes in, so as that we may safely affirm, He it is who is spoken of Personally and immediately as the object of the saints' love in the words of my present text ; *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world.* The *he* can be no other than Christ : it is before Him we are to appear : it is *He only* who is to appear ; and we have no cause for any one single fear, on account of our appearing before Him. *There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.*

I conceive it must most fully be seen, Christ is the Person who, in a very particular manner, is to be understood in the words of the scripture before us, in the which it is declared ; *We love him, because he first loved us.* It may here be asked, what is there in Christ, which is the object of the saints' love ? or, why and wherefore do the *We* in the text love him ? I would reply, there is every thing in Christ, why and wherefore *We*, such as are included in that term, should love Christ, and for the which they cannot but love him ! I would also suggest, whilst I mean in this place and under this head of discourse, to keep more closely to the Person of Christ, yet I neither mean nor design, to exclude the reasons for loving the Persons of the Father, and the Holy Spirit ; yet even here, the reasons why we love them, in their Personalities, and love to us, and why we love them in return for the same, and love them equally with the Person of Christ, hath for the why, and the wherefore, some distinguishments in it, which should be so cleared up, as that our minds might have right apprehensions of the same. Let it therefore be here noticed, so as not to be receded from, the distinction included in what hath been expressed, is altogether experimental. Whilst the mind which is enabled to distinguish it, must of necessity be supernatural, as all minds are which are regenerated ; so it must be led to receive the subject intuitively, or what is to be now delivered will be lost upon it. To save from all reflection, let me add, it is not that any spiritual mind is not

wholly, and altogether intellectual. No; all truly spiritual minds are; yet they are not all alike exercised, neither are they all alike kept up by intellectual knowledge of the same most divine and intellectual subject. Now to the subject before us: which is this; why, and wherefore do *We* love Christ? or, what is there in Christ, which so particularly draws out our love to him? This is now to be observed and set before you; in the which as we shall have all, for the substance of the same, set forth in the second part of the present Sermon, under these words, *We love him, because he first loved us*, it is only to be noticed, that mention what there is in Christ for the which we love him, is only a kind of introduction to these words, *because he first loved us*. How far I can express, or may make it clear to you, I know not; yet I conceive *We* who love Christ, must have our reasons for the same. I confess I think *We love him*, on the account of his Person, who being God-Man, hath all the glories of heaven and earth united in his Person. He is *He* who outshines the whole creation: the excellencies of both worlds; yea, of all worlds. He is the perfection of all. He is our Lord, our Head, our Bridegroom, our Saviour, our King, and our God, and we love Him as such. *We love him*, as God-Man, in whom all the glory of God shines upon us. *We love him*. He is the object and subject of our love. In our expressing our love to Him, we express our love to the Father and the Spirit, He being the brightness of glory, the express image of Godhead: in whom the utmost of all in God, respecting his Nature, Persons, will, love, perfections and blessedness is made known. Now as the right apprehension of all this is reflected on the renewed mind, so it is influenced with such particular views of each of the Divine Persons, and their particular acts of love, and as all acted upon us, individually upon us in the Person, and displayed towards us in the glorious salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as lead us out into distinct acts of love to them, for their immediate love to us, before all worlds, in the Person of Christ. As it may seem to be bringing in here, that which belongs to the next particular, I will therefore enter thereupon; in the which is to be considered.

2. The reason assigned for our love to God, by the apostle, who is the only speaker, which is this, *We love him, because he first loved us*. This all will be content to subscribe unto. Our love to God, either to God or to the Persons in God, to the Father, to the Son, or to the Spirit, is not without a why, or a wherefore. No; it is not; this the apostle affirms, and he also confirms; and that in the words before us; *We love him, because he first loved us*.

Union and communion with the Person of Christ, his relation to us, and his delight in us, are founded as it respects their original, upon the sovereign good pleasure of the Father's will; yet it may be said, out of this spring such a love of Christ for us and such a delight of Christ in us, that He could not be contented without leading us so into the knowledge of the same, as that we might enjoy in fellowship with Himself, all the blessings and benefits thereof. As this is made known to us, and we through the light and unction of the Holy Ghost, have the true apprehension of it in our hearts, we cannot but love him; yea, and that with a supernatural affection. This cannot be but it must at certain times, break forth in a very particular way towards the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ: whose glory is above the earth and heavens. He puts down

upon one view of Him, all on earth and all in heaven. We seeing in the light of the word and Spirit, his transcendent glories and beauties, are so enraptured that we are overcome therewith, we are overcome and charmed with the same: and *We love him*, for his love to us: for the relation in which he stands to us. We love him, for his love to us. We love him for his salvation for us. We love Him for his communications unto us. We doubt not of his love to us; neither do we doubt of our love to Him: so far from this, we are ready at all times and on all occasions to speak of Him, and his love to us; of the great things which he hath done for us, and of the truth and reality of the same, which he hath been pleased to evidence to our minds concerning the immutability of all this; that this is our testimony and witness on all suitable occasions, *We love him, because he first loved us*. As the word *We* and *us*, include all who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and love him, be they apostles or others, who lived then, or now, so they contain the same reason why Christ was beloved, and why he is now—It is because he first loved us. *We love him, because he first loved us*. So then neither the apostles before us, nor the saints who lived in the same age with them, nor their successors in following generations, nor such as now exist and are full of love to Christ, nor you, nor I, have any other motive or reason to love Christ, than this one common to all: it all rests upon his love to us. *We love him, because he first loved us*. If it be so, it is everlastingly impossible to bring in Christ to be a debtor unto us, for any expressions of our love to Him. We are wholly indebted to Him, for all the love which we bear towards Him. Must it not be so, if *We love him, because he first loved us*? Surely it cannot be otherwise: our love to Christ is but the effect of his love to us. This He hath most abundantly evidenced, in the love and out-goings of his heart towards his beloved from everlasting: this originated from the Father's everlasting love to Him as God-Man, the Head of his body the church, and to the church, the whole election of grace in Him. This is the high original of the love of Christ, to the many sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, on whom the heart of Christ was immutably fixed, from whom it never once departed. No; nor can it to the ages of eternity. It was not what they were by the fall, nor what they were in their sins and in their blood, made the least impression on the heart of Christ, to love them more, or less; yet the Lord took the advantage to express his love, openly and manifestly unto them, when they by reason of sin, were in the worst state they possibly could be. And when our Lord was pleased to shine forth in the brightest splendour of his grace, and give the fullest evidence of the same, it was when they were sinners, and ungodly: even when He was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He gave himself, his whole Person, God-Man, to bear their sins, and carry their sorrows. He shed his blood to cleanse them from all sin. He laid down his life for them. Therefore when the knowledge and truth of all this is brought home to their hearts by the Holy Ghost, at which time they are quickened with spiritual and everlasting life, they then, when inflamed with a sense of his love, cannot but express themselves thus, *We love him, because he first loved us*. Christ is the object and subject of the saints love, as truly as he is of their faith, and hope. The glories, beauties, perfections, and excellencies of his Person, as the same are reflected on their minds, ravish them. The sense they have of

his love, and the impressions of the same on their minds, and the sights they have thereof, when they are favoured with personal communion with Him, afford them a real taste of heaven: and they can have no communion with Him, but they must at the same time have communion with the Father also: and this can only be through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore true in every sense, we love the Father, because he first loved us: we love the Son of God, *who loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* And he made known to us, he had so loved, and acted on our behalf, before we loved him; so that we may well say, *We love him, because he first loved us.* So also the love of the Spirit of the living God, was from everlasting fixed on us in Christ: and he was pleased to give us in our own souls, undeniable evidence of this, by raising us up from a death of trespasses and sins, in regeneration, and quickening our souls, by virtue of our union to Christ, with life in Him, so as that we might know Him, and the power of his resurrection. As we cannot but love the Holy Ghost for his love to us in Christ, so when we profess our love to Him, we cannot but make the like acknowledgment which was expressed before, *We love him, because he first loved us.* O that the minds of all such as have tasted the love of Christ, may at all times, in all cases and places, be disposed to give Him, together with the Father, and the Spirit, glorious praise. May the Three in Jehovah be pleased to bless what hath been set before you, so far as it is the Truth, as it is in Jesus. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXI.

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*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?—1 JOHN IV. 20.*

As we love God, because he first loved us; so this cannot be, but it necessarily follows, we must love the people of God, the children of the Most High. To profess to love God, and at the same time to live in an uncharitable, irreconcilable, and envious malicious temper towards such as we call brethren in Christ, this is to give the lie to our most holy profession: yea, and to the scriptures themselves; which inculcate this duty upon believers: in which their true love to Christ is outwardly manifested. For, let our profession of love to Christ be what it may, if we love not the saints with whom we have society in the faith and fellowship of the gospel and ordinances; even such as we have seen and do see with our bodily eyes, and in whom we discern visible evidences that they really bear the image of God—If we love them not: then this is the question, and solve it if you can, for says the apostle, I cannot—how can we love God himself: He being invisible. He cannot make an im-

pression on us by our bodily senses, so as to affect our hearts, and engage our affections; therefore, if we are not impressed with seeing the image of God and Christ in others, wrought in them by the Spirit of the Lord; If a man, let his profession be what it may, say and speak out, I love God, and at the same time hateth his brother in his heart, *he is a liar*. This, says the apostle, is self-evident: it cannot be contradicted: for let but this question be proposed, and answer if you can, but by one single affirmation: there is no other way; which if done, comes to the point to which I have myself brought it. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* Surely this cannot be: it is wholly and positively impossible. In speaking on my text, I will divide it thus,

1. The apostle here separates one professor from another. He had in the former verse said, in the name of all the true members of the Lord Jesus Christ, including himself with them, "We love God, because he first loved us." Here he says, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. I will aim to take in, and comprehend all contained in this, in this my first head of discourse: then

2. I will give you the apostle's reasons for saying what he did: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* Under this head also, I will aim to be comprehensive, so as that I may set all the particulars of the words forth, without any more or further multiplication of divisions, as I conceive in a scripture so clear and plain as this before us, it will be best and most likely to be approved of. May the Lord assist, and shine with his blessing on the same. I will here recite afresh my text, the whole of it, and then enter on the first part of the same. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* What I have proposed to enter on, by way of explaining these words before me, is as follows:

1. That the apostle here separates one professor from another.

It was impossible for *John* to preach, profess, and write of the Person, grace, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but there would be a public profession made of Him, by some of all sorts. Those who should believe on him to the saving of the soul, they could not but openly confess him. Such as were but temporary hearers, and way side attendants on the word preached, they would, neither could they but make some confession, which would imply they had been in some instances externally wrought upon by the ministration of the word. What I am going to express, I could wish it to be noticed: it is this; the whole difference between one hearer of the word preached, and another, is precisely this—The one is the subject of regeneration, the other is not. The word operates spiritually on the regenerate mind: it is received: it is rightly understood, and produces its proper fruits and effects. The man not born of God, hears the same truth, he professes the same faith, unites it may be with a society of saints, to keep up and maintain the very same profession of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; yet he being destitute of the new-birth, in the which spiritual life, and supernatural faculties, senses, and apprehensions are implanted, he ever remains a stranger to the spirituality both of what he hears, and professes. Yet I should conceive, he may at certain times be more deeply affected under the ordi-

nance, than a real saint is; but it is in a different way: it can only be, the old nature is affected: which it may be with hearing of heavenly things: but it cannot be with them as such: it can only be according to the elevation of nature. Our apostle had said, *We love God, because he first loved us.* To this he subjoins, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* A man could not be under a profession of Christ, but it was involved in it and with it, that he should speak out his heart. He could not say any thing but truth; none would have been admitted into the churches of the saints in the apostle's day, who did not profess Christ, and that they loved him: it is expressly what he had delivered for himself and others in the preceding verse; yet here he comes in with an *If*; as though he doubted of the truth of this when expressed by some. *If a man say, I love God!* None could say so but such as made a confession of God: it must therefore be a professor: a member of the outward visible church of Christ: as such he was nominated a brother; yet such an one might be, and have these words in his mouth, *I love God*; whilst at the same time he might hate one whom he called a brother, as it respected church fellowship and communion with him in the profession of faith and ordinances of worship: but if such an one there be, who saith, *I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*: so says the apostle. This coming in, after so long and protracted discourse of the love of God and Christ, as he had delivered in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, and which he improves in the 11th and 12th verses, as incentives to draw forth love from the *we* and *us* towards each other: and his then again renewing the former subject of the love of God to the *we* and *us* who were the subjects of the Father's everlasting love; this fully proves the design of the apostle, was to inflame the hearts of the saints, from spiritual apprehensions and believing views and enjoyments of God's love, to love each other, as expressing thereby their love to God and Christ. Then these words could not but be the natural inference of the whole; "We love God, because he first loved us." Then, if any man, a professor of God and Christ, say for himself, *I love God*; if he does not give proof of this by loving his brother, he is not of one heart and soul with us. If he hateth his brother, and yet says, *I love God, he is a liar.* The apostle had used this very expression, divers times before: in the 1st chapter; in the 2nd chapter. And here, I would observe these words, *hateth his brother*, are strong: I should hope they belong to none of us. I would wish to cast some light on them, and such as may arise out of this Epistle, as I conceive that will be the most satisfactory. I will therefore here recite all the former expressions of this kind, which we have heretofore gone through, and then observe what may be considered as contained in the full strength of the expression. If the Lord blesses this attempt, it will cast a great and general light over, and throughout the whole of this Epistle, so far as it respects our present subject. In the 2nd chapter, and at verse 9th, we have these words, *hateth his brother*, for the first time. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." We have it again, verse 11: "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." We have it again, in the next chapter, verse 15. It is thus expressed, "Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." We have it again in our present text. *If*

a man say, *I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* I will now attempt to settle this word or expression, *hateth.* He that hateth his brother is so and so: both as to his state, and as to what he is. *He that hateth his brother, is in darkness:* this respects what his state is: he is not in the state of grace; he is not in the kingdom of God's dear Son; *He that hateth his brother, who continues so to do, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness,* and is so blinded as it respects his own state and course, that he walketh in darkness: this is his course; and the reason given why he pursues this course is, because that blindness is so upon him, he neither knows the state he is in, nor his walking in the same. "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." All this is very expressive of the evil contained in not loving a brother; yet the following words exceed all the former. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* chap. iii. 15. Now the question is this: as this last scripture follows an account of sinning the sin against the Holy Ghost, of whom it is said, such as commit it are of the devil, v. 8; if it be not the fruit and effect of this same sin, which the apostle is speaking of, when he speaks, as he does in the verses quoted, repeatedly over and over: I say, the question is, if it be not that hatred of the brethren of Christ which is the effect of having been given up, to sin the sin unto death? For if it be, it cannot but remove a great deal of anguish from the mind. I should conceive none of the saints, love each other so for Christ's sake, but they must most assuredly fall short of coming up to Christ's command, *love one another, as I have loved you.* I should also conceive our being more partial to some, than we are to other saints, cannot by any means amount to an hatred of them, which I must conclude I conceive is incompatible with loving them. When I read, as I do in my text, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar,* I am led to consider it to be necessary for me to understand what it is to hate a brother. I for myself neither envy or hate any one; yet I have my partialities, even among such as I account saints and children of the Most High God. I am therefore inclined out of real tenderness both to myself and others, to apprehend these partialities in myself and others, the Lord's people, cannot be what the apostle is speaking of, as amount to be in a state of unregeneracy—To a walking in that state—To be a murderer—To be like *Cain*—To have nothing of spiritual life and light in the mind—not to have eternal life in us: yet all this is the state and case of those the apostle is speaking of. Yea, and that in the words before us. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* It is the word *hateth,* I would lay a particular emphasis upon. And so it is, that as I conceive, we may find the whole emphasis and weight of the expression in these words, *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* It being here fully declared *Cain* was of the devil: and because he was, from hence his hatred of his brother arose, and it was under his influence he killed him. So the hatred against the brethren the apostle is speaking of, originates from the same source, spring, and fountain. The word



*hateth*, or to *hate*, or *hatred*, in its full significancy, implies the uttermost malice, hatred, contempt, and malignancy of the mind, which it can possibly conceive, express, or exercise towards any person we dislike, and this to the uttermost of the rancour of a malicious mind. This I conceive to be that which is included in what the word *hateth* doth imply. Well, Sirs, let this be applied to the subject before us, and it will amount to this—That *hating*, or *hatred*, or he that *hateth a brother*, as one who is a professor of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a *murderer*: that is, he is *one with the devil*. He hath committed the unpardonable sin: out of the which, this hatred, and hating, and he as an individual, *hateth his brother*, proceed. It seems to me these following words, which I am about to quote, will fully confirm all this: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not,” or, “doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Then it follows in the same context, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of the 3rd chapter. I would here ask, if the words quoted, do not reflect light upon all the apostle hath expressed in the former chapter, and also in this, and so likewise in the words of our present text, concerning him, be the person who, or in all other respects what he may, who loveth not his brother? who also hateth his brother? If it be not convincing that such were guilty of the unpardonable sin, and hating the brethren of Christ was the immediate fruit and effect of the same, then read these verses, 11th and 12th. “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” The *we* and the *us*, throughout the whole of this Epistle, distinguish the saints from all nominal professors. And whilst saints as such, may fall short of loving each other, as becometh the relation they stand in to each other, yet the disesteem they may have for each other cannot come up to such a height as to be stiled hatred, or hateth, or hating one another. So that to sum up the whole of the subject, loving the brethren, and hating the brethren, are the great distinctions between the children of God, and the children of the devil. Hence the apostle says, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. As he hated any sort or kind of deception himself, so he hated it in others also. He was for calling persons and things, by their own proper terms. *A liar* is such. If he is called or spoken of properly, this is his proper term. It matters not either his dignity, person, or profession; what he is, that he is. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. He proves himself to be so. He gives full evidence of the same; none need to be deceived thereby. And this is most clearly opened in the following words, and which we are to consider under our next and following particular, which is this:

2. To set forth, and give you the apostle’s reasons, for saying what he did: which are thus expressed by him; and they are cogent and weighty. They are these: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

God is invisible, so as that we cannot behold him, by our corporeal senses. We can only apprehend Him, as He hath been pleased to reveal himself unto us in the word of his grace: but by which as the medium, the Holy Ghost shining on the same, and shining into our minds thereby, He creates in our renewed faculties the true knowledge of God in the Person of Jesus Christ: yet all this is wholly intuitive: it is wholly incorporeal: but whilst it is so, yet we have the glory of God in his holiness, truth, and grace, set before us visibly and in a way to strike our spiritual senses, and draw forth our hearts towards Him, in the image of his grace reflected openly and manifestatively in the lives and graces of his saints, whom he hath formed for Himself, to shew forth his praise. Now as this is the case, and all the saints are the children of God, and are born of God, and bear the image of God, and reflect it forth more or less, outwardly and spiritually in their walk and conversation, how can it be but that they must love one another? If such as profess the knowledge of Christ, do not love others for his sake, does it not prove they have no right to say, *We love God*; or, individually, *I love God*; whilst at the same time that they thus profess, they hate such as they call brethren! You will be pleased to observe, I am now laying the whole weight of what I have been here speaking of, on the word *hateth* in its highest sense, including the tremendous malignity thereof; which according to the apostle constitutes such an one a *murderer*. He is therefore compared unto *Cain*, who was of the wicked one and slew his brother because he was a true believer in Christ Jesus. So that whilst every sort of conduct and behaviour in any of us, towards each other, as professors of the Lord Jesus Christ, unlike what the gospel sets before us, is reprehensible in us, yet dis-esteem and disrespect, do not amount to hatred, or hating. I would therefore wish this to be particularly distinguished upon, that we may charge ourselves rightly, and not at the same time, overcharge ourselves; nor take up such scriptures as are now before us, and torment ourselves with them. The apostle had said in the 12th verse of this very chapter out of the which our text is, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." And here he saith, *If a man, say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* The words are expressed so as to form a question: the which is put for any to answer if they can. None will be so fool-hardy as to attempt any reply unto them. Love to God, and love to the people of God, are inseparable. The truth of our loving God appears in our close attachment unto Him, in our love to his Truth, people, ordinances: to his beloved ones, such of them as we particularly know, and in whom we see the image of Christ. To hate any of them, is incompatible with grace. If on a sight and knowledge of them, and we by our spiritual senses, seeing and beholding that in them which is truly Godlike, heavenly, spiritual, and divine, are not moved to love them, and that for the Lord's sake, it is impossible we should be moved to love God, who is invisible and incomprehensible. Such being void and destitute both of natural and spiritual love, to those they call, and profess to be brethren in Christ, fully prove and evidence they have no supernatural love to God, nor Christ, nor to each other. Here comes in the apostle's inference, which is very argumentative. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he*

*hath not seen?* Answer this question, says the apostle, if you can: it is impossible. It therefore follows, let the man, and let his profession be what it may, who says, *I love God*, who yet at the same time, hateth his brother, how can he be any other than a liar. To hate his brother whom he hath seen, and does see, and to love God, whom he hath not seen, nor can see, how is it possible to make this consistent, or to prove this to be truth? Why it cannot be: this is the substance of the apostle's assertion: and it is also of the apostle's argumentation: which in its own nature, and statement is so clear, that I conceive nothing further need to be added hereunto. We love God, because he first loved us. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

The subject is very plain: the inference very clear: the reply of the apostle to the subject itself, calling the man a liar, very honest: it is done in truth and righteousness: there is nothing but truth and simplicity in the same. We may learn therefore the sincerity of the sacred writers, in that which they delivered in their ministrations. Here is no standing on compliments; neither is there any softening the expression. No; untruth is what it is, a lie: and to utter what is an untruth is to express a lie; so that such an one is a liar. It is not to say, what he might be in himself; or in some particular parts of his conduct; or what others in a general way think of him: be this as it might, it made no matter of importance with the apostle: this he declares, and will abide by; *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*: this he will by no means depart from. He so insists on this as truth, that he argues with demonstration on the same. *For*, says he, it cannot be but this is the fair conclusion of this our subject, which I will here put into a question for you, or others in succeeding ages and generations to answer if they can; *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* We learn from hence, there is no medium between love, and hatred. We either love, or we do not. I have admitted a distinction between love and hatred in this distinction of it, amongst saints as saints, and that towards one the other as such—That they may, they have their partialities one towards each other. Yea, there may be, and it is the real case there are, some dislikes and grudgings one to another, and yet they may love God, and each other. This being but the sad effects of inherent corruption; which as it breaks forth at times, even against the Lord, in some certain expressions and effects of the same, so it also doth at times, so as to express itself, in some instances, one saint against another: yet this is quite distinct and different from hating one another. Not but even this, is very greatly to be lamented: and we need the blood of Christ as much to remove the guilt of it from our minds, as we do any other evil, let it be what it may; but still this doth not amount to the sin mentioned in the text, which is thus strongly spoken by the expression of *hateth*. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. So that the sin here spoken of, is beyond what only originates in the mind, or is evidenced in the practice, of not expressing our love and affection to all the holy brethren alike. I have again and again expressed this, when the subject hath been before us in and throughout this Epistle, and that for this twofold reason: first, that the truth of the subject might be

cleared: and secondly, that the real saints of God, might not be embarrassed. I have therefore nothing more to add, but my hopes, whoever shall hear and read this will fully apprehend what is delivered. And also that seeing so much is said upon the subject of loving one another, as believers in Christ, and as one in Him, and one with Him, it may have and also produce this lasting effect upon us, all of us, who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, to avoid every thing which may convey the least cause, or suspicion to each other, or to any of the brotherhood of our not loving them, next to Christ himself. I now leave what hath been delivered for your consideration: hoping it will, in the place in the which it stands, reflect its proper light to give a clear idea of the apostle's sense and meaning in the words contained in the verse. And may it have its proper effect and influence on all our hearts. The Lord grant it for his holy Name's sake. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXII.

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*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.—I JOHN IV. 21.*

WE are brought in this verse to the close of our present subject, which as I conceive began at the 17th verse of this chapter, and runs on very smoothly and correctly to this present verse. By reciting the scriptures which I am about to quote, you in surveying them, will for yourselves, easily discern their connection and dependency one upon the other. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.* I have already sermonized each of these verses, except the present verse which is now before me; yet it appeared to me necessary to give you a general view of the connection of them, as they issue in the words now before us, just as exactly and precisely, as all causes produce their own true and proper effects. I will briefly present you with the general analysis of them thus. The true knowledge of God's love to us, in Christ Jesus, is brought home to our minds, by the Holy Ghost: this increases our love to God: it gives us such an assurance of the same, as casteth out all slavish fear: so as that hereby, we have increasing confidence in Christ. And we are so fully assured of his love to us, and of our union to Him, and of our personal interest in Him, as that we are filled with the utmost confidence,

that we shall have boldness before Him in the day of judgment: we therefore are looking forward to the same, without dread, or dismay. The right apprehensions of the love of God to us, remove from our minds all slavish fears: so it is evident, such as are possessed with them, are not at present, made perfect in love; nor in the knowledge and enjoyment of the same, which love of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is altogether free, sovereign, personal, and immutable: it is wholly independent of any act in us. We are the subjects of it; the whole cause why we are so, is in the will of God. *We love him, because he first loved us.* This produces its most blessed fruits and effects, of love to God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost; and also love to one another, as the people of the Lord. As this is the truth of the gospel, which cannot be controverted, therefore the apostle puts this question: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* The former part of these words, contains a clear and positive assertion; the latter part is a question, which never was, nor will, nor can be answered to the very close of time. God's free love to us, produceth love from us to Him. We cannot express the same so immediately to Him, as thereby to give evidence of it to others, He being wholly immaterial and invisible: we must therefore have proper outward objects to exercise and express it on. In our minds, the exercise of our love to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is wholly and altogether mental: it is a secret between God and us: it goes forth into actual communion between God and us. But as there must be an outward evidence of the truth of all, that it may be evidenced that we have been with Jesus, so there must be outward and visible objects and subjects, on whom we can exercise and express the same. We cannot so immediately exercise our minds, in loving each of the Persons in the Holy Trinity, but there must be such persons, men and women, in this our world, known by us, present before us, and with whom we converse, who must come in for their share in our spiritual love to God, and affection to Him. We cannot be those, who exercise our minds, in loving the Divine and infinite Majesty of the Three in the One Incomprehensible Godhead, but we must give outward proof and evidence of this, by loving the persons of the Lord's people, and in holding communion with them as such; those whom the Holy and blessed God hath been pleased to distinguish as the objects and subjects of his everlasting love, and are declaratively the brethren of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shine as bearing the clear evidence of their having been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, in whom it is evident that He dwelleth; and they holding the true faith of the gospel, these are the persons, who are the objects and subjects, on whom, and towards whom we are to exercise our love; to the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and as expressive of our love to them, for their great love wherewith they have loved us.

In these words which are now to be opened; *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also,* we have the following particulars.

1. That out of the love of Christ to us, and by the commandment of our Lord, we are under the authority of the same to love one another.

2. That in so doing we manifest our love to God. In the which,

as all the particulars of the subject may be opened and enlarged on, we shall have the present subject, and chapter completed. May the Lord shed his own light and influence on the same, to the praise of the glory of his holy Name. Even so, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. I am

1. To show and set before you, out of these words and from them, this important truth, as contained in, and arising out of them—that out of the love of Christ, and by the commandment of our Lord, we are, under the authority of the same, to love one another. *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

Whilst according to my division, I have made but a two-fold portion of my subject, yet I shall aim to view and explain each particular contained in the words before me. We have had the subject and substance of loving one another, of loving for Christ's sake, of exercising ourselves thus for his Name's sake, and out of love to him, so frequently, as we have been going over this Epistle, that I know not what may, or can be added to the same. Yet as these words of the apostle still remain for us to travel over, therefore it is, I am now engaged to go through them. And it is out of the love of Christ to us, and from the knowledge and experience that we have had of the same, we are under a divine obligation to God, and Christ, to love one another. To this it may be added, as this is the principle from whence this love originates, so we are under the obligation of a Divine and positive command to exercise and practice this love. *This is his commandment.* Our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to say to his apostles, the same evening he was about to suffer for them in the garden, and where he bore their sins, and purged them away by his most precious blood, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. "These things I command you, that ye love one another." v. 17. It is from hence our apostle saith, *And this commandment have we from him.* The *him* is Christ. The apostles received this commandment from Him. They had it also given unto them for the whole church. It became them to deliver the same. They did so: and that in the Name, and by the command and authority of Christ. It was from hence it was to receive all its sanction and influence. It was to be received and maintained upon the same foundation, in the church and by the people of God in every age, and throughout all succeeding generations, and to be practised by all saints down to the end, as a perpetual and immutable command—As the command of Christ—As expressive of love to God, and Christ, and the Spirit—As obligatory and binding on all the holy brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus: which the apostle with the utmost simplicity and sweetness expresses thus: *And this is his commandment, or, And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

The apostle in the word *we* includes with himself all the apostles: and also that he, and they were as truly included in the doctrine, commandment, and under the obligation of obedience to the same, as any of the members of Christ were. They were by no means freed from their full obedience of this command given by Christ to love one another: it was so natural to them to love one another out of love to each other for Christ's sake. As our love to Christ, and to each other in Him, spring out of the love of Christ unto us, so these words before us, are expressive of our Lord's

command for the continuation of the same. *And this commandment have we from him*; to continue in the observance of it, so as to abound more and more in the same, and that perseveringly therein to the end of our continuance in this present state. It seems also, these words are used by way of discrimination: to distinguish between those who loved Christ, and those who did not: this is confirmed by referring to these words in the former verse; *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* To which he adds, *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.* He who loveth God, loveth him out of a sense of the love wherewith the Father loveth him. It is with a supernatural love; so it is also with a spiritual love, believers in Christ love one another. It is a brother in Christ is the object and subject of this love: and the continuance in this love, and an abounding therein, is a blessed fruit and evidence of the reality thereof. It is perseverance in every grace is the crowning blessing: so it is here; as out of the love of Christ to us; for it is He, that is mentioned in the words before us, and from the authority of his command, we are under perpetual obligation to love one another, as brethren, and partakers of Christ. So I pass on,

2. To observe, that in so doing, we manifest our love to God. This most assuredly is what our text declares: what are these words but a full evidence of this; *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.*

This manifesting our love to God, by our loving our brother next to God, is by external and outward expressions to such an one. The apostle expresses himself on this part of the subject, so as to point out individually how love is to be exercised for the Lord's sake. It is not only all the saints as saints, towards and upon whom our love is to be exercised; but it is to be expressed personally and individually: it is hereby the reality of it is most especially discovered; as hereby we are most likely to have the best opportunity to exercise the same, in such a way and manner as the Lord Jesus may be glorified thereby. I would like to convey this following idea, on this present subject to the mind—The love of one individual to another, for Christ's sake, seems in the words before us, to be very particularly glanced at; I ground this on these words: *That he who loveth God love his brother also.* The word *he* is in the singular number: this is not without design; it not only diversifies the subject from the former terms, *we* and *us*, but leads to such an apprehension of the subject as this—That the realization of the loving God, and the brother in Christ, is as truly evidenced and it shines forth from one brother in Christ to another whom he knows to be in Him, and whom he loves for his sake, as it is by loving all the holy brethren, throughout the whole world. Every saint cannot but love all saints, and that as saints. There cannot but be real prayer offered up to the Lord on their behalf, and an invoking every grace and blessing for them. We cannot hear of such and such being brought to the knowledge of the Lord, even though we know them not personally, but we must rejoice in the same, and it well becomes us so to do; and hereby we exercise and express our love to God; and this is one particular way by the which we express and manifest the same; yet we can do this only in a general and universal way, but even this is good and acceptable and well pleasing

in the sight of God : yet let the substance of all this, be reduced and simplified in individuals, and for example's sake, be set forth between two persons who love one the other for Christ's sake, and we shall have it more perfectly stated, and this too according to our text, than we can have any other way. *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

It is the love of God made known, and enjoyed in the heart, is the fountain and spring of all love in us, towards each other for the Lord's sake. Where the love of God is, that is, the person in whose heart the love of God is, he it is who loveth God : and this love is always, at all times, and in all places, resident in him. It is not at all times alike influential and operative : yet it is always alike inherent in the mind. Out of it naturally and necessarily, as one grand concomitant of the same, love to a brother in the Lord springs forth. That on which this love is exercised is the brother, as one whom God hath loved with an everlasting love : as one who is united to the Person of Christ, whom He hath redeemed with his most precious blood, and who hath been brought to the knowledge of the Father's love, and into fellowship with Christ, in the blessings of his great salvation, by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit : it is this which constitutes a brother in Christ. This more or less conceived in the mind, of one the other, and as the truth, power, and grace of the same are apprehended and received into the mind of two persons who make the same profession of the everlasting gospel ; these form a foundation for spiritual love and affection in the hearts of each other, so as that they are hereby fitted to walk together and with each other, and exercise their love to God by loving mutually also. I think we have in this explanation of the subject, the essence of what is set before us in the text ; especially in this second part of it, *That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

And now I come to enter particularly and decidedly, on this part of my subject, which is to shew how, loving one another, out of love to God, and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall therein and thereby have the apostle's meaning in these words, *That he who loveth God love his brother also* ; more than by expressing the same any other way. Let not this sound strange, for it is not so, in our loving God, and Christ, and the Spirit ; do not all perceptions of the same, spring up in our own spiritual minds, under the secret influences of the Eternal Spirit ? Are they not all the personal acts of our own minds ? Is it not hereby our love to God is discovered ? And is it not herefrom, that all our external evidences of our loving God, and giving evidence of the same to others originate ? Most assuredly it is even so. Then it must be in what constitutes love in the same spiritual mind, which all the regenerated and new-born people of God are the subjects of, that our love, one brother in Christ, to another brother in Christ originates also. And in the exercise of the same towards each other, in the course of their civil and spiritual fellowship, the reality and strength of the same will be displayed and fully expressed. Two children of God, united in heart and soul to Christ, and to each other, according to the will of God, have an opportunity of exercising themselves, and expressing their love to God, and each other, in the following personal way and manner, so as to express the strength of God's love to them, with their personal experience thereof, as the whole church considered collectively cannot ; that is, not



in a particular manner. Saints in their present state, are but saved sinners: they have all sin, and sinfulness in their fallen nature: as they are personally acquainted with themselves, and with each other, they have increasing evidence of this. Now for two brothers in Christ, to love each other for Christ's sake; to bear and forbear one with the other: and notwithstanding the weakness, sins, and sinful infirmities they see, and cannot but see in each other, yet so to love for God's sake, and out of the sense and belief they have of the great love wherewith the Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, have loved them; surely this gives such a personal view of the love of saints individually towards each other, as casts light upon the passage before us, and may serve for our improvement on, all our days. Love in one individual in Christ towards another in Christ, is an immutable love: that is, it springs up in the renewed mind; it is wholly God-like and divine; it is the effect of everlasting love; it is fixed on such as are, at least we conceive them to be, the objects and subjects of the Divine complacency. Therefore whilst it is not always alike expressed, neither is it always alike displayed and manifested, yet it is always alike in the mind, as the fruit and effect of our new and heavenly birth. So that two individual saints, united unto, and closely compacted in heart and affection to each other in the love of God, will love each other, in every case and circumstance they may be called to pass through: because their love to one the other is wholly supernatural: it is for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ: and it is maintained in them by means of what they know of Him in their own minds, by experience of his Truth, and in communion with Him. As in looking on, and loving each other in Christ, there is an overlooking each other's corruption, and a considering each other as also in the body, so the strength of each other's love in Christ is hereby very particularly manifested; and hereby we are enabled to act one to another as it becometh the gospel of Christ. The Divine Father loves us and beholds us in Christ, always in Him, one and the same. Christ presents us to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The Holy Spirit bears at all times in the scriptures of Truth, the same testimony for Christ, and concerning our completeness in Him. We have therefore at all times, one and the same reason to love each other in Him: to feel for each other; to compassionate each other; to pray for each other; and to encourage each other in the Lord our God; these are some of those personal and particular acts and exercises of love, which are fully evidenced towards one the other for the Lord's sake; which personal and particular communion with one and the other in Christ, and in walking together, they are blessed with and have such particular evidence of, as seems to me to be the substance of what the apostle is here setting before us: *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

Thus I have been led through that which I proposed. It is now before you, so as that you may pass your own judgment on the same. So far as it may cast any true light on the subject, or set before you the right statement of the same, I shall most truly rejoice. Because as therein consists the glory of the sacred page, that in and throughout the same, every subject is properly set forth, so in every exposition of them, and throughout every attempt to give an explanation of them, it should be very particularly attended to, to give every part thereof, its due and

proper latitude. It cannot be conceived, I have attained this to any degree of perfection; neither is this to be expected; yet the attempt may be useful and the design laudable, although the full end be not attained. I would recommend it to all public persons, who are at any time called to exercise themselves in any office in the church of God, and amongst the people of God, to study their subjects in all their parts and branches, in all their weight and bearing, and study the same from those portions of scripture, from whence they form and derive their subjects, and be very attentive to the connection of scripture. It will be of great use and advantage both to themselves, and those they minister unto. I pray the Lord may be pleased to bless what I have set before you, as we have been going through the former chapters, and this also, to the close of which we are now brought. Lord Jesus, pardon all which thou seest amiss. Bless thy truth, so far as thy great Name, and people may be advanced and comforted thereby. Even so, Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXXIII.

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*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.—*

I JOHN v. 1.

THIS is the last chapter, and it closes the whole of this Epistle. It is under some views and considerations, as important as any one in it. The love of saints, as the effect of their new-birth, as expressed by loving God, and keeping his commandments, is very clearly expressed. The commandments of Christ are pleasant unto them. They overcome the world, in the belief of the Truth contained in the everlasting gospel. In the which the Incarnation and Messiahship of Christ, are most gloriously and fully attested by Three Witnesses in heaven, and Three on earth. In the which is included the record of eternal life, which God hath given in the word of grace, *And this life is in his Son*; and, *He that hath the Son hath life*; and *he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*. After this, the apostle closes, giving an account of his end in writing this Epistle, and of the confidence he and other saints had in Christ, as it respected his hearing and answering their prayers, and bestowing upon them the mercies and blessings requested. How we should deal on the behalf of a sinning brother. One who had sinned the sin unto death, was not to be prayed for. Such as are born of God are preserved from it. The knowledge that the Son of God was come, and the knowledge the apostle, and other saints had of the truth of this, and of their personal interest in Christ, are declared. And the chapter is closed with this exhortation, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*. Thus I have given you the outline of the chapter. The subjects are to be brought more particularly before us, as we shall be led in our ser-

monizing each and every verse of it; which is that which now lies before me. The words of my present text are these which follow. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him:* in which words the following particulars are contained.

1. A most solemn assertion, in the which all the articles of our most holy faith are included. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* Faith in Jesus Christ is an evidence of the new-birth. This faith hath Christ for its object, and it is exercised on Him.

2. Every one who thus believes what is expressed in the former clause of the text, viz., *that Jesus is the Christ*, does of necessity love Him who begat them to this faith, and together therewith they love every individual also that is born again, and made partaker of like precious faith in Jesus the Son of God. *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

It is what I shall aim at under these two general heads, to include and comprise the whole contained in the text, hoping it may be so done, as may be instructive, clear, and satisfactory unto you, so as that your minds may be properly enlightened thereby. All which, let my endeavour and desire be what they may, and execution also, depends entirely and alone upon the grace, teaching, and blessing of the Holy Ghost. He is the Unction from the Holy One, who teacheth and guideth the mind into the knowledge of the Truth contained in the Holy Scriptures. I am

1. To open and explain this most solemn assertion of the apostle, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* In the which all the articles of our most holy faith are included. Faith in Jesus Christ is here declared to be the evidence of the new-birth: this faith hath Christ for its object, and it is exercised on Him: these are the subjects which I am now to set before you, in going through this first particular. May the Lord so lead me through the same, as that you may receive real satisfaction. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

I conceive these words are for the substance of them the same, with the 15th verse of the former chapter, and which reads thus. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." That they both unite in this—A testimony in each of them is borne against the antichrists and false doctrines which were expressed in the then present day, against the Godhead of Christ, and against the truth of his Incarnation. I shall, under this view, open and explain this most solemn assertion, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* That Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, this was the doctrine of the apostles. The antichrists in that age, withstood the truth of all this; and hereby denied our Lord Jesus Christ: in so doing they gave the lie to God: they corrupted the whole system of grace: they shewed their uttermost contempt of Christ, and drew away many disciples after them. Only such as were the Lord's, whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world, were preserved from their snares and errors. To distinguish these, and shew the truth of their faith and most holy profession from the bulk of the common herd of hearers and professors, the apostle *John* says, *Who-*

*soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* It was the fruit of their new-birth, and the only true evidence of it: by the which he also fully signifies, all those who did not believe our Jesus to be the Christ of God, were but natural unregenerated persons—That they knew not the Lord—That they were of the world, under the power and influence of the devil, and as such they were to be avoided. They being deniers of the true Messiah, and enemies to his eternal power and Godhead, were no other than blasphemers, therefore the saints were neither to have, nor to hold any sort of fellowship with them.

There having been a good deal of opening and explaining in these foregoing Sermons on this Epistle, concerning the antichrists, and heretics in the apostle's day, it is needless to recapitulate the same here: yet I could not wholly omit saying what I have done, seeing I could not open and explain my text without it; as I could wish to keep close to the subject the apostle is upon, as well as to open also in the words, that which is of importance in them, as they concern us. In the day in the which our apostle lived and wrote this Epistle, it was true christianity and the greatest evidence which could be then given of it; to profess the truth of Christ's Godhead; to testify of his Person, that He was both God and Man. Hence it is we read, *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* This being a truth which was universally denied by the antichristian party; as was also the truth of Christ's having been manifested in the flesh: so that the apostle says, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:* this being a proof that such as confessed this truth, also were of the Lord's side, and that they were enlightened into the knowledge of his Truth. He therefore would have them to make the same conclusion which he himself did. Yet as these same words are written for our present, and also for the benefit of all succeeding generations, I shall aim to make some farther improvement of them. And as all the articles of our most holy faith are included in the words themselves, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,* it shall be my aim to set these important truths before you. *Jesus* is to us who are born of God, the one immediate object of faith. He is so as revealed in the everlasting gospel. He being the one Mediator between God and us: and as He it is in whom salvation is. He being the Person who bore our sins, and carried our sorrows: and He being a partaker of our nature, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh by taking the same into union with his Person, and He having been in our world, and lived, obeyed, suffered, and died for us, hence it is, we can approach him with the utmost freedom and confidence. Salvation is of the Father, it hath been accomplished by the Son, it is revealed and set before us by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of Truth, by the which we receive that knowledge of the Father's love, and the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ into our mind, by the inspiration and teaching of the Holy Ghost, which is to us life everlasting. The Holy Spirit drawing out our spiritual minds, into act and exercise on what he hath inwardly taught us, and on what He is pleased to set before us, of Christ, his love, righteousness, sacrifice, burial, resurrection, and ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto the Father by Him, this is the means whereby he draws forth an act of faith on Him. And in proportion as He is pleased to take of the things of Christ and shew the same to the renewed mind, and open the

renewed mind and will to know and receive the same, faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ are increased; and thus believers are brought to be rooted, and grounded, and settled in the Truth. In the true knowledge of *Jesus*, of his being a Saviour, is included and comprehended, the knowledge of the Father and the Spirit; so that the doctrine of the Trinity is secured in the right scriptural knowledge of Jesus, the one and only Saviour of the Father's appointing. And this Jesus being the Christ, the *Anointed One*, here we have the Holy Spirit, who anointed Him as the Christ of God, when He entered on his open incarnation; and also before, and at the time when he fully entered on his ministry, which was after He had been baptized of *John in Jordan*. In the expression, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ*, is implied an open profession and declaration of Him; and in this is implied all the articles of our most holy faith, and these are briefly summed up, and are thus expressed by the apostle *Paul*; "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we (speak, or) preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 8—10.

The soul is the subject on which the Holy Spirit works and produces a new creation which will last for ever. This is evidenced in regeneration; which is the habit of faith, or the epitome of it. This is evidenced and made known by the Holy Ghost, who draws forth the new-birth, or what is contained therein into open act and exercise, as the same is acted distinctly on Christ, and that in the same way and manner in the which He is set forth in the word. So that the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ received into the mind, from the clear and full revelation made of Him, in the Gospel, is the instrumental means of our faith being truly and particularly acted on Him. All which is under the especial and particular influence of the Holy Ghost. And it all is an evidence that such are born again; or, such a knowledge of Christ, and such and such very particular acts of their minds towards the Lord Jesus Christ, would not break forth in their minds towards Him. So that we may certainly conclude with the apostle, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*. It is an immutable fruit and evidence of the new-birth; and hereby it is fully ascertained. And nothing short of believing on Christ to the saving of the soul, is the fruit and effect of the reality of our being born of God. If this were received as the truth, it would save us from various and abundant mistakes: it would save us from looking into ourselves for this new-birth; for whilst it is in us, and we are the subjects of the same inwardly and spiritually in our minds, yet it is neither the subject of our faith, nor is it the subject of our spiritual sense. Whilst, once regenerated we never cease to be the subjects of the same, yet what it is and we are thereby, is just as much unknown by us, as our natural existence. We know we exist; but we know not what our existence is, nor wherein it consists. It is confessed by us that our existence is of God: all which is right; yet this confession is but a bare acknowledgment that so it is: this by no means amounts to a comprehension of how it is. So such as are born of God, born from above, born again, born into Christ, and thereby brought into Christ's world, may perceive all this is true of them, yet to say, when this took place in

them, and how such and such evidences of this were given them, and how the truth of all this has been evidenced and made manifest to others, from and by them, this they cannot say. Many of those who are born again, can say, when they were first sensibly affected, and brought under the mighty operation of Divine grace; yet this is not to say, when the first operation of the Spirit of life from God, was put forth in them. Regeneration and conversion to the Lord are distinct subjects. They should not be blended together; the one is the cause, the other is the effect. A man must be born of God, or he cannot be converted to God. Christ is the object, which is so suited to the spiritual faculty, that so soon as the object is let in upon it, the eye of the mind is opened to receive and discern the same: and hereby it is that the act of faith is actually begotten in the soul; and this being the case, it can never be obliterated out of the mind. Hereby Christ the object and subject being let in upon the renewed mind, it hath true scriptural apprehensions of the Lord Jesus, as the author and finisher of faith, the person commences a believer, and hath eternal life in his soul. Our Lord himself says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. And again he confirms all this, in thus expressing himself, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 47.

Faith in Christ hath and contains its full evidence of regeneration; because the whole of the spiritual mind is wholly and intellectually exercised on its object, which as thus engaged, it is fed and feasted: it is nourished, strengthened, and increased. The very mind itself forgets its own acts, as it is wholly engaged with, and swallowed up in the Person, love, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the new-birth, or the spiritual life, and the spirituality of the mind is evidenced: and the spiritual life conveyed and imparted to the regenerated mind discovered. Hence it appears, that *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*. As Christ is the object of faith, so all the acts of the spiritual mind are immediately exercised on Christ; but not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit. Yet as it appears to us, they are so immediately exercised on the Person of Christ, God-Man, in the glories of his Person, the love of his heart, the immense worth and work of his salvation, that we are led at times to such immediate and free intercourse and communion with Him, in the grace and blessings contained in these particular subjects, as to be swallowed up with holy satiety in the same. Yet the Father and the Spirit have their joint concern in all this—The Father as he who so loved us, as to give Christ for us, and to give Christ unto us, and hath so loved us, as to reveal Christ in us: and the Holy Spirit, as He who created in our renewed minds, all the knowledge we ever had or shall have of Christ, now and for evermore; so that the Holy Three lose none of their manifestative glory in the minds of saints, because they are at times wholly and entirely swallowed up in Christ, and absorbed in spiritual exercises wholly and entirely on Him, and in distinct and immediate communion with Him. As these words contain a most solemn assertion, in the which a scriptural evidence is given us of the certainty of the new-birth, by the which we may know that we are, or are not the subjects thereof, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is*

*born of God*, let us attend unto the same; let us improve upon it, and profit by it: this will be to answer the very end and design of the apostle, in his writing, delivering and affirming the same. May the Lord the Spirit shine with his own light upon what hath been delivered, and give us so fully to conceive of it, that we may so continually live a life of faith on the Son of God, in the full belief of his having loved us, and given himself for us, that in thus living we may have continual evidence of the truth of our being born again—of our being born of God. And from hence may we love the brethren, as the blessed fruit and effect of our being in Christ, and of our having communion with Him, and He with us, and as being brethren in Him, and partakers together in Him, in all the blessings and benefits of grace and glory. I would add to the whole which hath been delivered, and with it shut up this first head, that I conceive thus of the new and spiritual birth, on the which our apostle lays such an emphasis, making it the grand criterion, and an immutable evidence, that such and such are the children of God. My apprehensions of it are, that this new-birth, which in itself is but a spiritual faculty, unto the which Christ, and the Father's everlasting love is revealed by the Holy Ghost, hath in it, all that intuitive knowledge of Christ and eternal things, concreated in it, and together with it, as will remain therein all through time, in death, and also in heaven for ever. So that there being the whole knowledge of Christ, and eternal things laid and inwrought in the regenerate mind by the Holy Ghost, nothing remains but for that Sacred and most Divine Agent, to draw out the same into act and exercise as seemeth good unto Him. All that remains, be the new-born either in earth or heaven, is but for the Holy Ghost to open the spiritual faculties, and exercise the spiritual senses on the revelation which the Eternal Three have made of their grace, to their beloved, as set before them in the word of Truth. I conceive I am perfectly right in all this: it is altogether agreeable with my own experience of the subject: it is so inherently in mine own soul. I confess it requires strict examination; and that both from the scriptures of Truth, and also from the real genuine experience of grown saints. It will not do here to consult with saints, who have as yet no growth into Christ; neither will it do to speak on this great subject, to such as are not skilful in the word of righteousness. It is only those persons, who are to be witnesses whether these things are so, who are personally and practically well acquainted with the operations of the Spirit of God within them; who have a sound scriptural judgment in all things; who are well acquainted with the Person, love, relation, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this in personal communion with Him; and this from and in the revelation made known of Him in the everlasting gospel—To them only, and alone, I submit my judgment on this point; which if it be found that I am right in, and have the scriptures on my side, then I add, it would be of great moment and importance, to have this grand point rightly stated; as it would then most clearly appear, that *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* But to proceed with our subject before us. I am

2. To set before you, that every one who thus believes, what hath been expressed in the former part and clause of my text, *that Jesus is the*

*Christ is born of God*, such also love every one who is born again, and begotten by the same Spirit, into the same true knowledge and faith of Christ with themselves. *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

In this second part of my text, we have the inseparable fruits and effects of the new-birth; *and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* Let us therefore enquire who we are here to understand by *him that begat*. I apprehend the Divine Father is here to be understood. It may be observed, that the new-birth, or our birth into the spiritual world, or our new-birth into Christ is in the scriptures variously attributed to each of the Divine Persons in the Godhead; which is very agreeable with a maxim amongst all sacred divines—That all the outward acts of God, are applicable to each of the Persons in God. Thus in the instance before us: the new-birth is most commonly attributed to the Holy Spirit; yet not so as to exclude the Son and Father, from having their concern in the same; as all the external operations of the Holy Trinity flow from, and are the acts of the one immutable will of God towards them who are His. This hath been so often expressed by me, and scriptures quoted to evince it, and that if I do not greatly mistake, in many of the foregoing Sermons, that I consider it quite superfluous to quote the same here. I would therefore only now just say as much as may confirm this, that, as in the last verse of the 2nd chapter of this Epistle we read thus, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him;” that is, of Christ; most assuredly it is attributing the new-birth to Him. In the next chapter we read of being *born of God*; which most undoubtedly is the attributing our new-birth to God in the Person of the Father. In connection with this, in the very next chapter, it is declared by our apostle thus: “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” chap. iv. 13. What is this but a most solemn confirmation, that our new-birth, and the whole sustentation of it in us, is from the Spirit? And I conceive nothing can be more clear, than that the Person here spoken of, must be the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father. Let us view it, and see if it be not so; *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* No one can believe aright in Christ, who is not born again: no one can be born again, but he will confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Christ of God: no one can do so, but he must love the Divine Father, who hath created this faith in him, and also hath formed him for his praise; such cannot but express their love, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath brought them to the true and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation, He having revealed his Son in them. We who are born of God and enlightened with the true knowledge of the Holy One; this is a very true, grand, and fruitful part of our new-birth—We love the Father for his great love wherewith he hath loved us in his beloved Son: this fruit of our spiritual birth, flows forth and is very particularly exercised towards and upon our heavenly Father, for his love to us, in his Beloved. When we are first brought to the knowledge of Christ, we are at that time, and for a long season afterwards, very particularly and expressly swallowed up, in our hearts and



affections, in apprehensions of the Father's love for us, and this as manifested in giving Christ to us, and in setting before us the greatness of his love to us herein.

What I am desirous of saying, and would say, could I speak out the whole of my mind on the subject, is very congenial to and with all contained in the past chapter, of the which I have spoken so largely in the former Sermons. A true and spiritual knowledge, perception, and apprehension of the same, flows into the renewed mind, and is enjoyed therein, by the power of the Holy Ghost; from whence it is, our love to the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, flows forth: and as the consequence of the same, is most freely and spiritually expressed and exercised in the minds of the regenerated people of God, to the end their love to God might be increased and drawn forth into act and exercise towards him. This is the fruit of a new and supernatural birth: every one born again loveth Him that begat them, as his children in Christ Jesus. A soul brought to the true knowledge of the Father's love to him in Christ Jesus, cannot but love Him, and this in return for his free, sovereign, and everlasting love to him. In the day of our spiritual espousals to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have very free and clear perceptions of the Father's views to us, in his beloved Son. Whilst we are on this, and every subject similar with the same, it ought ever to be remembered, we are on what is wholly personal and experimental. I am all for an immediate access to Christ, and unto the Father by Him: and this in consequence of a spiritual, inward, and real perception of his everlasting love to us in Christ, irrespective of any thing in us, or that we perceive ourselves to be. This is so much the case with us, when we are first brought to the knowledge of Him, that we esteem it to be our first love: and many there are, who esteem it beyond all which they enjoy afterwards; yet this is all through a mistaken notion of the reality of the subject: for what real saints enjoy in their going on and walking with God far exceeds it; not for the reality of it, but as it respects the knowledge and enjoyment of the same. I am very much on the side with those, who make every farther discovery and enjoyment of heavenly and eternal things, so to surpass the former, as that they really in a way of believing, enjoy in their own souls what far exceeds the former. I have walked with Christ, and God in Him, beyond fifty years: I have found myself always alone, in what I call communion with Christ. I do not find those I call the children of God one with me in it. If I am right in my own apprehensions, and as just going to enter into the invisible state, and really am in the act of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, I have never yet found one of the same heart and soul with me in these particulars: yet I know, I am perfectly contented therewith. I know the way of access to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, and I am perfectly contented therewith. No believer should by any means confine himself to what another believer hath to say on the same subject. Communion and walking with God, is wholly a personal concern. It is neither more nor less, in the actual experience of the Truth before us, than as the Divine Majesty is pleased to let down some of his bright beams of love and truth, and grace and glory into the mind. It is this, and only this, which makes such a variety of difference in the real experience of the saints. And this is the upshot of it, *We love him, because he first loved us.* Moreover this is another glorious fruit hereof, *Whosoever believeth*

*that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*: from whence proceeds love to God, and unto every one that is born again. This is the second fruit which is now to be treated of. And it cannot but be so; let it be in the age in the which we live, or in the age in which the apostle lived, or in succeeding ages; it will ever be found, that *every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*. Love to God will ever produce love to such, and to every one that is begotten of God. The reason for this is evident; because the work of regeneration is one and the same in all the saints. They have all in them, one and the same divine nature; in the which are contained the same principles and heavenly graces; so as that they all have one and the same intuitive knowledge of God inherently. They have all one and the same faith in God. The foundation is inlaid in them, for the enjoyment of one and the same communion with the Three in Jehovah. It is not designed hereby to imply, that all saints in this present state of regeneration, into the which they are brought by their new-birth, have and do hold freely and fully, the same height and degree of communion, as it respects the knowledge and enjoyment of the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's consolation. No; yet this is to be understood by it, that they have equal and alike interest in the whole, as they have equal and alike union to the Person of the God-Man, Christ Jesus, and to the Father and the Spirit in Him. No one saint can have greater cause, nor motive for loving God, Father, Son, and Spirit, for their everlasting purposes of grace in Christ, than another: and this should be kept alive, and also maintained in our minds, even by all the regenerated people of God, to the end their love to God might be increased, and also our and their love be drawn forth into act and exercise towards such; yea, even all of them, as are begotten of God, as they may come under our knowledge, and even such as we may hear of, as bearing the image of God. It is herein we exemplify the truth of that which is here testified of, and declared, that *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*.

Thus I have endeavoured to set before you these two glorious fruits of the new-birth. The one love to God; and this for his begetting us anew in Christ Jesus; and hereby translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son: by the which we are manifestatively in Christ, and hereby fully proved to be members in Him. And the other fruit of the new-birth which is here spoken of, is the giving us so to love such and such as are born of God, as makes it evident hereby that we are believers in Christ, and the children of God. We love, and we cannot but love them, on this very account. Thus this love to Him that begat, and loving those who are begotten of God, are good and substantial proofs, and outward evidences of our regeneration. I will now aim to sum up the essence of all contained in the verse before us, which is this—To profess in the apostle's time, in direct opposition to all the heresies of the then present day, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, who rose from the dead, and was from thence, to his ascension into the highest heavens, the space of forty days here on earth, that this most adorable Person was the Christ of God; the true Messiah, was full proof that such as abode by this truth and confessed this, be it an individual, or a whole body of professors—that such an one, that such

persons were born of God. So to the present moment be it in the case of one, or in whole churches of the saints, it remains the same invariable truth, that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life, whosoever believeth in the Person of Christ, that He is in the Godhead co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, that He is truly God and Man, that He is God over all blessed for ever: he who thus believes of Him, and concerning Him, he is born of God. Such an one hath Christ in him. He is everlastingly secure. He is hereby made meet for eternal glory. He is called unto it. He hath a title unto it. He is made a partaker of it. He loves the Father for this his distinguished and distinguishing love, towards him. He also loves all those, whom the God of all grace, hath been pleased thus to distinguish with the same favour. *Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* The phraseology and individuation in the which these words in my text are expressed, should not be overlooked. Whilst millions are the subjects of the Father's everlasting love; yet it is personally and individually enjoyed by them; and it will be so in glory. Therefore to be sensibly and particularly impressed with a sense of the Father's love, to our persons in Christ—it is this which alone can most sensibly affect us. It is also from the same, we can sensibly and with true spiritual affection, love one another. *Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

May the Lord our heavenly Father, if it please him, so divinely and sensibly refresh our minds, by giving us such personal and particular apprehensions of his love to us, as may very truly and effectually draw out our hearts unto Him. So as that we may, in our thanksgivings unto him, express the same in our loving Him, for his love to us in his beloved Son. And may we also most gratefully express the same, in our loving all the new-born. May we thus seal the truth contained in the words before us: *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* What I have set before you, to elucidate the text, so far as agreeable with the revealed mind and will of God in the same, may the Lord himself bless it. This is all on this subject, that I can possibly desire. Therefore I wholly commit it into the Lord's hand. May he be pleased most graciously to make it his own concern. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXIV.

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*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.—1 JOHN V. 2.*

IN and throughout the whole of this Epistle, the apostle draws one general line of distinction, between such as simply professed the Lord Jesus Christ, by the outward and general doctrine of Him, and such as really

knew Him by the same, to the real profit of their souls, and their salvation. As also he does accompany with this, such professors as were carried about, and away from Christ, and the Truth as it is in Him, by the heresies, and false and blasphemous doctrines of the then present time. Therefore it is that the *we* and the *us* are so often mentioned. The apostle knew he was a regenerated person—That he was born of God—That all, each, and every one of the regenerate people of God, had the same evidences concerning the reality of being born again of God, which he himself had. He knew that there were, and could not but be, outward proofs and evidences given by each, and every one of the new-born, concerning what the Lord had done in them. He had elucidated this point in a variety of instances and particulars in the former chapters. He had said of himself and others in the third verse of the second chapter, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” And in the words before us, he says, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* Loving the children of God, is, according to our apostle, the fruit of our loving God. Which love to God, is most abundantly evidenced, when we keep his commandments. As this epistle is closed up in this chapter, so it appears to me, the grand line of distinction is kept up between the real saint, and the mere nominal professor. As also between such, and those who were left of God, to commit the sin unto death: by which is meant the sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Lord Jesus Christ hath pronounced to be unpardonable; and of the which I have given you my thoughts, in the Sermon on the 7th and 8th verses of the third chapter. It appears to me, I cannot better divide my present text, and set before you the substance of what is contained in the same, than by the following division.

1. How it is we know that we love the children of God. *By this we know that we love the children of God.* How it is we are brought unto, and have the true attainment of this knowledge, is to be declared.

2. The love of God is the only motive of our loving the children of God aright. It is on account of their relation and likeness unto Him. It is God’s image we love in the saints, and love the saints for.

3. And thus to love the saints, is to keep the commandments of God. Here I would recite the former verse, and join it with the present, hoping the one will reflect light, and give a view of the connection with the other. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* I will now enter upon the particulars of my text. And

1. I am to set before you, how it is we love the children of God. The text which is now before us says, *By this we know that we love the children of God.* The question then is, How is it we are brought unto, and have the true attainment of this knowledge? It is this which is now to be declared.

Without all doubt, the apostles, and those believers which were contemporary with them knew each other to be the Lord’s, from the knowledge of Himself, and his Son Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit had wrought

of the same in their minds. As this was altogether suitable and agreeable with the revelation given in the scriptures concerning the Father and the Son, so hereby they knew who were, and who were not the Lord's, by the right, or wrong confession and declaration which they publicly made of the same. I conceive our apostle hath here an especial reference to such as were kept from the antichristian errors and heresies which abounded in that day: indeed the words going before in the former verse justify such an apprehension. Such as knew the Truth, and were kept alive in heart and affection to the Truth, in the true knowledge and confession of the Person, mission, offices and work of the Messiah, that He came from the Father, and was that Prophet that should come into the world, had inwardly an invincible evidence in themselves that they really, spiritually, and intuitively knew Him. And so we, all of us who are partakers of Christ, have infallible evidence of our having the true knowledge of Christ in our own renewed minds. I am writing on this present subject, according to the scripture revelation of it, and most exactly agreeable with my own views thereof; therefore let not the same be rejected without comparing it with the word of grace. In going through the comment on this first epistle of *John*, it hath been, that many a time the same subject, at least the same for the substance of it, hath recurred: if therefore nearly the same things have been repeated over and over, it is not to be wondered at. Nay, I see not how it could possibly be avoided; except no particular notice had been taken of some of the verses. My friends, I have not the vanity to think I shall shine as an Expositor by means of that which I have written: all I aim at, or desire, is to cast some general view on the scriptures, so as that you may receive some real profit thereby: this I do most sincerely aim at, and desire.

In this our present age and time, how is it we love the children of God? How are we to accommodate these words to ourselves, which are here expressed in the clause before us, *By this we know that we love the children of God?* Can it be by any other way, or means, than by our being brought to know the Truth as it is in Jesus, by the same way, and through the same medium? Can it be otherwise? I think not. What then is this one way, and means? I answer, the revelation of God in Christ Jesus unto us: and this wholly and entirely from the word of the gospel, by the inward light, teaching, and revelation of the Holy Ghost. This then opens the subject before us, which is this—how we know in ourselves that we love the children of God; it is from their saying the same things of Christ, and of the Father's love in Him to the elect, which we ourselves have been inwardly taught, and have had the true knowledge of in our own souls. As we, and they have been taught the knowledge of Christ, from the same word, and by the same Holy Spirit, and have been and are favoured with the same spiritual and supernatural views of Christ, and the Father's love in Him, so as that we are hereby made one spirit in the Lord, and with each other in heart and affection in the substantial knowledge and communion with one the other in divine and eternal Truth; it is from hence we know that we love the children of God. I conceive there can be no other right way of opening the text before us, than this plain attempt which I have aimed at. I hope the same will prove satisfactory: if so, and if I rightly apprehend my own meaning in that which I have stated and expressed, it is this—Our personal and intuitive knowledge of supernatural and divine Truth, is the

very inward cause and motive of our loving such and such for the Lord's sake. We know they are the children of God, because they think and speak of Christ, His glory, majesty, dignity, and excellency, as we do ourselves: in consequence of which, we have an inward and spiritual fellowship with them in the things of Christ. Their apprehensions of his love and great salvation, with the views they have of Him as set forth in the gospel are so suited with our own, that we cannot but acknowledge them to be taught by the same Spirit—By this we know we love the children of God—By this we know that they are the children of God: and we have this knowledge of these persons, subjects, and things inherent in our renewed minds: the apostles had: the primitive saints had: so we as saints have also.

In my time I have heard many speak of Christ: also who have preached Christ; and such as have professed Him: yet, I have made this observation, that amongst such as preach the Lord Jesus Christ, it is but some of these who so preach Christ as to give full, clear and satisfactory evidence of their real knowledge of Him—That they have inward communion with Him—That they have fellowship with Him in the blessings and benefits of his great salvation—That what they really say of Him is to gain Him an everlasting Name, to spread his fame, and to increase his honor and renown. Now whilst I have not to do with such whose ministry does not reach this, yet they have not the same place in my heart with the former; neither are they the ministers of Christ to my soul. So amongst such as profess Christ, I have found some speak of Him, as if they had really been admitted into his divine presence: as those who have been favoured with real believing sights of Him: I have felt an heavenly and divine unction dropt on my own mind, with an heavenly savour and fragrancy of Christ upon my heart from what they have related. Whereas I have heard others say the very same things for substance, yet it hath been to me but mere words: this hath led me to conclude the former the real children of the Most High God; and to think but little of the latter. I believe this is the way in which all saints treat this subject before us, for I can by no means allow of this, that I am singular here: so far from it, that I conceive this statement of the subject, will be acknowledged to be a plain explanation, and a true one of these words here before us, *By this we know that we love the children of God.* This is our motive and cause for it; we are not in a state of uncertainty about those whom we love as such. As we are able to give a reason of the hope which is in us, concerning our own personal faith in Christ, so are we concerning our love to the children of God. I would it should be observed, the apostle is here, as also in that which follows, still upon the great and grand evidence and distinction, between true professors and false ones: that is, he is upon the essential distinction betwixt those who believed Jesus to be the true Christ, and those who disbelieved this; which will most evidently and convincingly appear, as we may be permitted to enter and go forward in opening the succeeding verses. Our apostle often drops his subject: he takes up another; and then resumes the former: it is so here; for all in the former verse, in this, and the following to the close of the eighth verse, is but the conclusion of the former subjects contained in several parts of the Epistle, and especially in the former chapter. He would have himself to be understood, that such as have not the true faith of God's elect, cannot love

the elect of God : they that have that faith must know fellow-believers to be such, or they cannot love them as such : nor can they know, or have the least reason to believe them to be such, but as they are admitted to the knowledge of what such and such have to say of the Person of Christ—Of the love of Christ—Of the salvation of Christ : and how they were brought to the knowledge of the same. It is by a free and clear scriptural declaration of the same, we have as saints, professing the same faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the true knowledge of each other, by the which we only can judge of each other ; and we do so. If it be not thus, I ask what are we to make, what can we make out of the apostle's words, *By this we know that we love the children of God?* According to him, the evidence which we have in our own minds, arises from an internal persuasion, that such and such are so. Look at his words again, and say if it be not so? *By this we know that we love the children of God.* Be as critical as you please, and carry it as connected with the former verse, and then see if what hath been advanced, is not the native result of the same. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God : and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* We cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ, without a scriptural knowledge of this, and we receive it into our minds from the supernatural light and revelation of the Holy Ghost concerning the same. So neither can we love the children of God, as the children of God, without we have a supernatural knowledge and apprehension they are such. It cannot be denied but all this is very congenial with true spiritual reason and faith : if so, then abundance of love one to another, and which the generality of professors make so much of, is but natural, and must fall to the ground ; and the sooner it does, so much the better : that is, so as that persons may not deceive themselves therewith, as if it were the very grace the apostle *John* speaks so much of, and dwells so much upon throughout this Epistle. I conclude I have so fully spoken out the whole of my mind on this point, I need say no more. I therefore will go forward into my text, and open the remainder of the same, in each of the particulars thereof : and this according to the division which I have before given of it. I am therefore,

2. To set before you the love of God, as the only motive of our loving the children of God aright. It is on account of their relation and likeness unto Him, that we love them. It is God's image we love in the saints, and which we love the saints for. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God.*

I think I may with the greatest propriety say, the scriptures speak of two wonderful acts of God's love to us. The one his loving us personally and individually in Christ from everlasting. The other his manifesting and making known the same to us, in his own time, and according to his own will. It is from the manifestation of his love to us, our love to Him commences. No man could ever have known more of the Father's everlasting love, and of the glorious expressions of the same, in the gifts and fruits of it, in the gift of Christ, and salvation by Him, and in the bestowment of the Spirit, with his grace in revealing the Lord Jesus Christ in us, and unto us, as the Hope of glory, than our apostle did. It is true he treats of the whole of this subject, not in a doctrinal,

but in an experimental manner: this contained a very large portion of the former chapter; and it seemed to me absolutely necessary, to say something of this, because he here says, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God.* As we love God, because he first loved us, so our love to Him, is entirely the fruit of his free and sovereign love to us. And it began in us, it sprung up in our renewed minds, when the Father's love was made known in Christ Jesus to our hearts: and it will remain and continue in us for evermore. Not sin, or death can ever eradicate it out of us: and when we have the most spiritual enjoyment of the same, then it is we love the children of God: and we love them, whom we know to be the Lord's, his beloved and adopted ones, on account of their relation and likeness unto the Lord. They are united to the Person of Christ: they are admitted into union and communion with the family and household of God: they are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; as such, as thus known and apprehended by their fellow saints, they cannot but be beloved by them: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God.* And we cannot love God, but we must, we are most divinely influenced to love for his sake. Whilst it is an everlasting truth, God's love is primarily fixed on the persons of his people, abstracted from all other considerations whatsoever, yet God so loves them, as that in regeneration He creates within them, and reinstamps upon them the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness: and He cannot but love this image and likeness of his Son Jesus Christ, in all those who are the partakers of the same. So saints, as saints, in their measure and degree, love God their heavenly Father, and his beloved ones, out of the sense, enjoyment, and experience of his love to them: and as they love them, from an inward apprehension wrought in their minds by the Spirit of God, that such and such persons are the Lord's, so they also love them, as they reflect the image of Christ, the likeness of Christ, the graces of Christ, the tempers of Christ, in their lives and conversations: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God:* which cannot be but it must hereby be expressed; and is a great part of our spirituality and love to our heavenly Father, to Jesus Christ our Saviour, and to the Holy Ghost, who is the glorifier of the Father's love, and Son's salvation in us, under whose most gracious influences it is, we both love our heavenly Father, and his beloved children: and are witnesses of the truth of what the apostle here says, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God.* The one produces the other, and is the evidence of the other.

The subject of loving one another, and each other as one in Christ, and with him, has been so often in our proceeding in commenting on various verses in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chapters of this Epistle, that I fear, neither can I doubt of the same, but it hath so run into what hath been delivered, that many things have occurred and been spoken of, over and over. I mean, I fear it hath been so, without that holy variety which is absolutely necessary to keep the attention of the mind rightly unto the subject: if it be found so, let it be wholly imputed unto me. I am fully persuaded there is that vast variety on all, and every subject, treated of in this very Epistle, which is all-sufficient to keep up the spiritual mind, with holy, spiritual, and increasing delight. If it were not so, it would not be worthy of God. No; nor of his apostle either. Let this then



serve as a sufficient and full apology for any tautology I may have tried and tired your patience with. I hope I have by no means, put the cart before the horse, in any of my expoundings on such texts as this now before me: if so, I am most heartily sorry for it: and can assure you, I do by no means wish you so to understand it. I am for giving every scripture its true meaning, and so far as lies in my power, its proper interpretation. It is the knowledge of the doctrine of grace, or, the true knowledge of the grace of the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, which alone can influence the renewed mind, to love God for his great love to us in Christ, and produce in us, true and holy love to the children of God. We can only love saints as saints, upon the pure principles of the love of God, as the same is revealed and shines forth upon us and into our hearts, in the face of Jesus Christ. I will now proceed to my last particular on the present words, which is this:

3. That to love the saints as the children of God, because of God's love to them, and on the account of their relationship unto Christ, and for that they bear his image, is to keep the commandments of God. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

To know that God loves us, and to know that we, in return to Him, by way of gratitude love him, this must wholly proceed from the Eternal Spirit, and the grace of all this must be wholly and entirely attributed unto Him—To know in ourselves and have the real evidence of the same in our own minds, that we love the children of God, must come from the same Holy Spirit—To have all this proceed from our loving God, and founded in our own minds to the saints of the Most High, because they stand in relation of children unto Him, which is grounded on the good pleasure of his will towards them: to love them because of their union and relation to the Person of Christ, and for that they bear his image and likeness, surely all this is wholly and altogether heavenly and divine—To love the saints as the children of God, this is to love them aright. So that the apostle might well say of himself, and for others of the family of heaven, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* It was fully evidenced of their being born of God—That they had the true knowledge of Christ—That they were real partakers of Him—That they were true believers in Him—That they enjoyed a real sense, and had the real experience of the love of God in their hearts. In the third chapter of this Epistle, we read, “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” We are referred by the margin to these words of our Lord; “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;” and to these words, chap. iv. 11; “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;” and to John, xiv. 15; “If ye love me, keep my commandments:” and chapter, xv. 12; “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” And in the margin which belongs to our present text, we are also referred to many of these which have been quoted; which proves that the commandments referred unto in this expression, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments,* must very particularly be applicable to loving one another for the Lord's sake: which may be.

variously spoken of, as the command of God, and the command of Christ, as it was from the Divine Father as a part of his revealed will which was expressed and commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ. The keeping the commandments of God, in loving the children of God, was then, and is to the present moment, an outward and substantial evidence of their, and our being on the Lord's side.

To close this part of our subject, lest the same things should be recited over and over, I would leave what hath been delivered to your consideration. Ponder on it. You will most certainly find some things in the truths which have been delivered, which may be of use and service. May the Lord the Spirit shine upon your minds, and lead you to contemplate the love of God towards his children; how he loved their persons in Christ from everlasting, and how he will continue his love to them in Christ, to everlasting, and by his continual shining on them in the Person of Christ, He will be giving them continual proof of this throughout the ages of eternity. I can conceive of nothing beyond this, as all-sufficient to draw out the heart of saints, as saints, in acts of love towards each other, even in this present time state. Nor can I conceive any better expressions of our loving each other as the children of God, than by freely conversing with each other, on spiritual and heavenly subjects: and hereby freely imparting what we know of the Father's love, and of the Son's salvation, and of the Spirit's grace, to each other. It must most certainly be the means of cementing us in spiritual affection one to another, and also of rendering ourselves useful to each other. Sometimes weak saints are very greatly improved and strengthened, by hearing such as we style grown saints talk of the glories of Christ—The vehemency of his love—The strength of his affection—The greatness of his mercy—His never-failing compassions towards the whole of his family, and beloved ones, in this our world: and it is a part of that love which grown saints have for Christ, and which they should on all occasions be ready to exercise towards all their brethren, more especially towards the lambs of the flock. The consideration of their being united to the Person of Christ, and that as such they cannot but be most near and dear unto him, is a most powerful stimulus to excite to this. It is to keep the commandments of God, thus to act: and the Holy Spirit is all-sufficient to produce all the blessed fruits and effects which are connected herewith, in our minds. This is most certainly the substance of that which is contained in the words before us, at least so far as I have at present the apprehension of; and I will here recite the same, that we may neither forget it, nor overlook the outline which hath been given, concerning the explanation thereof; *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

It is the love of God, prevailing in our hearts, which carries all before it; out of a sense of which it is, that we, apprehending who the children of God are, love them for the Lord's sake; in so doing we keep his commandments; He having revealed it as his pleasure, that we should act thus. May the Lord give us a greater and more increasing knowledge of his love to us. May it be given us to increase in having and holding communion with the Divine Father, as our Father in Christ Jesus, in the full blessedness of the same, so

far as we are capable of the true sense and understanding of it, this side heaven; as it is this which will alone be the medium of our loving, and of our increasing in loving the children of God. It should, when we are on such a subject as this before us, be considered, which is the best and most suitable way in the which we can express this love: surely, to put on the bowels of Jesus Christ; and exercise the same, as it hath regard to many soul-cases and distresses which at times, befall the Lord's people, should not be neglected. It is good to feel for souls who are distressed with sin, who groan under the ruins of fallen nature, and are distressed with manifold temptations, from without and within; as also from the devil, who delights to cast his fiery darts at them. It is good to shew our love to saints, when they are about to depart out of the body, by praying for them, and this as most exactly suited to their cases as we have the judgment of. And if we visit them, so to speak to them of heaven, and the state of Glory, and of the house eternal in the heavens, into the which they are to enter, immediately on their dismissal from the body, as will be suited to fill their minds with hopes full of a glorious immortality. I only can cast out some faint hints, how our loving and our love to the children of God may be evidenced, realized, and improved: in all which we only attend unto our Lord's command of loving one another; and thus we keep in remembrance the love of our heavenly Father, and this as influenced by the Holy Ghost. The remainder of this Epistle, chiefly consists in giving full proof and evidence of Christ's Messiahship: this is testified of as founded on his Eternal Person, and Divine Sonship, which is attested by six Witnesses—Three in heaven, three on earth: the former verses, with the present and the three following, are introductory to this most important branch of discourse. I therefore just cast out the hint, that it may keep up the mind to the expectation of the same. The Lord pardon every thing which hath been short of the subjects treated of, and make up all the deficiencies by his own most blessed teachings and the inspirations of his most Holy Spirit. I therefore now leave the whole with you, for the employment of your minds, and with the Lord to bless as seemeth good to Him; saying, Amen. Even so let it be, Lord Jesus. Amen and Amen.

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## SERMON LXXV.

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*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.—I JOHN v. 3.*

OUR regeneration, or being born of God, appears, by our loving Him above all, and beyond all, and loving his children for his sake: which is

a certain evidence of our loving God. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments* : which are to us, most easy and delightful, we having them written and inscribed on our renewed hearts, by the Spirit of the living God : so that we are endued by faith to apprehend them, and enabled by Christ to perform them. Nor are any of them grievous and burthensome unto us. No; we find it the most perfect and absolute freedom, to be found in the observance and practice of them. We therefore most freely confess, to the honour and glory of God's free grace, *his commandments are not grievous*. God's love to us in Christ Jesus, is an act of the good pleasure of his will; whereby he hath been pleased, and will for ever be well pleased to bestow on us, and continue us to be the objects of, his love; so as that we shall for ever enjoy all the blessings contained in the same. Our love to Jehovah in all his Persons, begins in us to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, from the manifestation of the same to us, in our regeneration and conversion to the Lord. And the whole essence of our love to the Eternal Three, consists in our keeping the Lord's commandments: that is, this is the only way by the which we can make an outward manifestation of the same. That you may see the dependence of these words with the former, I will quote the two former verses; as much depends on the connection and harmony of them: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous*. The outline of which is thus expressed in the contents of the chapter—That such as love God, they also love his children, and keep his commandments, which to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are easy; they are by no means grievous. The text seems to me, to cast itself very naturally into this three-fold division, and from the same, I will endeavour with the Lord's blessing to open and explain it unto you.

1. The inference which the apostle draws from what he had before delivered, concerning every one who was born again; *Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*; and that such knowing the children of God, loved them. This was made manifest by their loving God, and keeping his commandments: which he in our text says is the love of God: *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*.

2. I would give a short word upon the *commandments*. Or, rather, what we may understand by that expression here. I conceive it must be considered as extending itself to the whole of God's revealed and preceptive will, as contained in the Scriptures.

3. That to keep the commandments of God, is most truly acceptable to a renewed mind, to all such as are born of God: to such his commandments are not grievous; *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*. I am

1. To set before you the inference which the apostle draws from what he had before delivered, concerning every one that was born again. He had said, *Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*: to the which he added, that such *knowing the children of God*, or in other words, that *such knowing those who pro-*

*fessed the same faith with themselves* concerning the glorious Messiah, were the children of God as truly as themselves were; loved them as such. This was the fruit of God's love, as they had the sense and enjoyment of the same in their own spiritual minds. If you read his words, this will most evidently appear to be the truth of what he is here speaking of; for this is the love of God that we give evidence of our being partakers, and have also in ourselves the real knowledge and experience of the same: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

This subject is all drawn into this one great and grand sentence in the words before us: *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* I must also observe, the whole of our subject before us, is experimental and practical. It is neither our believing in Jesus, nor our loving God for his great love to us in Christ, nor our loving the children of God, nor our loving them in obedience to his Divine command, and all this out of real love to the Divine Majesty, is either the cause, motive, or reason why, or wherefore He loveth us. Neither is what the apostle is here speaking of, set forth or by any means designed, as that we should make use of any of these as the ground and foundation of our confidence in the Lord. The matter of fact is, the apostle is stating the difference between the children of God, and nominal professors: that as the one knew Christ, and had him dwelling in their hearts by faith, so they also loved Him in his real members, in whom they saw his image and likeness: whereas the anti-christs, and heretics of that day, and the whole herd and bulk of their associates and followers, hated and detested the same. Let this be rightly received and thoroughly understood, it will cast as I conceive a true and proper light upon the chapter; to which may be added, he is preparing the mind for this very distinction itself, as he in the very next verses speaks of who overcomes the world, and who does not. It is by faith in the true Messiahship of Christ, and that He is in his own Person the Son of God, by Essential Necessity, as One in Godhead, of the same Nature, and Eternity with the Father and the Spirit, that the children of God overcome the world, and all false doctrines propagated by all sorts of false preachers and professors. As the inference of the apostle drawn from these premises—that he, even *every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*; that all this proceeds from the love of God; that hereby our being the subjects and partakers of the same is manifested, as we in so doing are made manifest to ourselves, as truly as we are to others, that we love God, which is seen in our keeping his commandments, is, as I conceive, very easily apprehended; so I will proceed to give some general account of the way in the which real saints give evidence and manifest their love to God, from a real knowledge of his great love to them. This is in the high estimation they have in their own minds, of the love of God in his own heart towards them; and this as it is made known unto them by the grace and testimony of the Holy Spirit. When he sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, and by the same gives them the real enjoyment of it, and inward communion with the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father thereby, this leads them into such admiring and adoring thoughts of God, as that they cannot but express in their own minds before the Lord in silent, and in

open acts of praise, blessing, and giving thanks unto his most holy Name: saying, it may be, with *David* when the Lord shone on him in the splendour and meridian of his love, by way of the reflection of his love, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house, for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." The words, which are quoted from 2 Sam. vii. 18—21, express the sensations of the mind, when the Lord was pleased to let in a more than ordinary ray of Divine love. When this and similar passages are at any time quoted, it is not to suggest that saints break forth into the same expressions: it is only to shew that saints are at particular times so overcome with the views which they are favoured with, that they are wholly lost in such overwhelming conceptions thereof, that they are absolutely at a loss how to express themselves concerning the same. Now in such outgoings of heart towards the Lord, they evidence and manifest their love to God in his Divine Persons, and acknowledge his Essential Perfections as displayed towards them, in the outgoings of his heart, in his everlasting complacency in their persons, as they are beheld by the Divine Father, in the Son of his love. It is not to be understood, when such scriptural expressions as those are quoted, that they are the very expressions with which the saints utter themselves, and worship the Lord with in their own minds; but they are similar as it respects their desires, and devotions. Now as saints in their high prizing of the love of God, and his mercy in Christ which endureth for ever, and in praising Him for an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, containing all their salvation, the whole of which is ratified and established by the most precious bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, and was slain from the foundation of the world, express the fervour of their affection and gratitude for the wondrous love of God; so also as the spiritual mind is exercised on the same, there is a revenue of glorious praise which is ascribed to all and each of the co-equal Persons in the Self-Existing Essence: and in the which the saints give evidence of their love to God. This is also manifested in their high prizing of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ—In their rejoicing in the Glories of his Person, and the transcendent majesty, excellency and perfection of his love, mercy, and salvation—They love him for his love—For his salvation—They love Him for what He is by relation unto them—They love Him for that which He is to them as Mediator, and Saviour. In their attachment unto Him, in their high praises of Him, in their simple reliance on Him, in the outgoings of their hearts towards Him, in their personal intercourses with Him, they express their love, and souls delight in Him. So also as it respects their love to the Holy Ghost—This they personally and particularly acknowledge, as they confess that all that they know of the Father's love, and Christ's salvation, from the Scriptures, is from Him only—That it is *He* who teacheth them to profit: I knew one who used to say, "I love the Person of the Holy Ghost, because He loves my

Christ, for that He delights to glorify Him in me, and for shedding abroad the love of the Father in my heart, and leading me into communion with the Father and the Son:" *Mr. Benjamin Pitts, of Chard, Somerset.* In the many instances I have expressed, the love of real saints to God is evidenced, as well as it also is, in loving the children of God, and that because we know they are such: and amongst them, such as are but babes in Christ—their love and attachment to the gospel of Christ, to the ordinances of Christ, to have communion with Christ, and God in him, through the Spirit, is evidential of their love to God. To sum up the whole—In all this is the love of God realized, and we are hereby proved to be the subjects thereof. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* And this leads me to my next particular, which is this;

2. To give a short word, on what may be considered, as included in the term, *his commandments.* *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* This says the apostle in our text, is the love of God.

Surely it will naturally and necessarily appear to all intelligent persons, that there can be no better way, by the which we can express our love to God, than by our keeping his commandments, and walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. It is by some asserted, to be one of the evils which accompanied the corrupt doctrines of the antichrists, and heretics of the apostle's day, that they were all of them enemies to good works: they were deniers of all sort of practical godliness: they made no account of the same. It would have been astonishing if they had: for what they advanced was wholly and altogether repugnant thereto. There is but one doctrine, or system of Truth, which is according to godliness; and this is the Truth, the whole contained in the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, to the which, the keeping the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, are most closely attached. The sum of which may be said to be to receive Christ—To believe in him, and rest on him, wholly and entirely for salvation—To honor the Father for his love to us, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us in his beloved Son—And also the blessed Spirit for the revelation which he hath given of Christ in the sacred word, and for his testimony and Seal which he hath set unto the same. Yet these important matters properly stated, understood, and expressed, do not come under the terms of commandments: they are truths revealed by the Lord: which when saints receive from him the true knowledge of, which proceeds wholly from grace, they very closely attend to the belief and practice of. So that to speak properly and precisely, there is not one command in the whole gospel: for even believing on the Lord Jesus Christ—when this is wrought within us by the Holy Ghost, it is produced in such a supernatural way and manner, as that it is done without any consideration of any command enforcing the same. In the course of this Lecture on this *First Epistle of John*, I have most assuredly laid forth this subject before you, so far as I am capable of. But whilst the gospel is one pure revelation of grace, and the elect of God are made partakers of all the grace and glory of the same, without any act or performance of theirs; yet this I acknowledge, that in the dispensation of the gospel ministry, many things are connected therewith—Such as the

ordinances, the precepts, and the commands of Christ: both as they suit a church state, and what concerns the members of the same; as also every individual believer in filling up the state and circumstance in life, in the which the Lord hath placed him. All which may well suit and be very suitably expressed by the term, *commandments*. Under which may be comprehended the preaching the gospel, with the administration of its ordinances, Baptism and the Supper, together with all which belongs to the church of God, in its instituted state, as enjoined by Christ. Surely all this may most justly sustain the term, *commandments*; and *his commandments*.

I should therefore, connected with this, consider under the term *his commandments*, let the same be applied either to the Father, or the Son, all contained, of the preceptive sort, in and throughout the whole written word of God. And in the true and hearty observance, and practice of the same, the saints of the Most High God, express their love to him: so says the apostle; *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*. Amongst professors, so it is, that some are all for practice, irrespective of faith: others there are, who are all for faith, without works. So that some speak contemptibly of works, and some of faith. These are great extremes. The effects and works which faith produceth, are not to be spoken contemptibly of. No; they are not. Every thing in the Book of God should be attended unto. A life and conversation, by the which the doctrine of God our Saviour may be adorned, and recommended unto others, should most carefully be attended unto. What that life and conversation consists in, can only be known by the revealed word of God. Wherein it consists, can only be understood by us, as we attend to the commands, precepts, and exhortations set before us in the gospel. The Scriptures are the unerring rule. I here end what I proposed to express, on this part of my subject—That in and with the term *his commandments*, is included all, and every thing—all which the Lord hath commanded in his written word, to be the good pleasure of his will, his saints should observe and follow; let the same be either precepts, duties, ordinances, or what it may be. And this as it hath respect to our interest in Christ, our salvation by Christ, and our conformity unto Christ. Thus I end this second head of my discourse, and proceed to my next, which is this: that,

3. To keep the commandments of God, is most truly acceptable unto a renewed mind. And that to all such as are born of God, his commandments are most truly pleasing. To all such his commandments are delightful. This the united suffrage of the saints, as the same is recorded and testified of, both in the Old and New Testament, most fully declare. They are by no means grievous. No; this they are not; *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*. So far from being *grievous*, there is nothing more pleasant, pleasing and delightful.

When the love of God is experienced in the mind, then there is nothing commanded by the Lord, to be attended unto, which is grievous, or disagreeable unto the believer. The Spirit of the living God, works in him to will, and to do, and act according to the Lord's holy will and pleasure. It may here be necessary to observe how we must be brought into a knowledge of our state of blessedness and safety in Christ, before



this obedience can be performed, so as for the same to be acceptable in the sight of God. When the Holy Spirit hath been pleased to reveal Christ unto any of us, and purified our hearts from the guilt of sin, by faith in his most precious bloodshedding, and the renewed mind is established in the real knowledge, and right scriptural knowledge of our reconciliation by the Death of Christ; it is this reconciles our wills to the will of God, so as that he being at perfect peace with us in his Beloved, we love Him, his Truth, his ordinances. We delight to walk in his holy ways, and to walk before Him unto all well-pleasing: all which may well be expressed by the term of *his commandments*. And by the same, we are brought to submit to his holy and righteous dispensations in his providential dealings with us. It is the real knowledge and enjoyment of our heavenly Father's love, brought into our minds by the grace of the Eternal Spirit; by the which our minds are kept up in act and exercise, in such believing apprehensions of the Person, blood and righteousness of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God, as give and create in our minds, a real spiritual delight in attending unto, and in walking in the commandments of the Lord; and are the cause of our expressing our delight in the same. It must be confessed, that certain it is, many whom we cannot but look upon, and call children of God, have such false views and conceptions of what most justly deserves the title of practical godliness, that they conceive it to be distinct from the gospel, as if the same was by no means connected with it: whilst the real truth is, they are so united as cause and effect, that without the one, the other cannot exist. The doctrines of the everlasting gospel, are the foundation of all spiritual practice, and real godliness in its acts and exercises: the which hath so often, in the course of these Sermons been suggested, that it appears to me, the same needs no farther improvement. I will therefore here end, as to what I have to say to explain the text: what follows is only by way of appendix, if so be it may cast farther and improving light on the subject.

It appeared to the apostle, in his writing this general Epistle to the whole church of Christ, necessary to set forth those essential differences and distinctions which then existed, and which will ever be found, between the children of God and those who are not. Let it be noticed, he does not lay the foundation of their eternal state on the same: he is only speaking of what they are manifested to be in a time state; for the Lord God acts in a sovereign way and manner with the elect sons of men, in this our world. Some saints are remarkable for holiness, godliness, and spirituality, and good works, and this throughout the whole of their walk with God, from their conversion to Him, to their glorification with Him: and there are others, who are as remarkable for their sloth and inattention to these, and yet we cannot deny, from some important sayings which at times they utter, but that the root of the matter is found in them: and they often in their deaths, give evidence, that they are in the Lord, and that they die in Him. Some of the Lord's people are permitted to live almost to the close of life, before the Lord is pleased to give them the least knowledge of Christ, and the power of his resurrection: so that there is no place nor time for such, to keep the commandments of God. Yet it must be acknowledged, there is one and the same work of grace, wrought by the Holy Ghost in all whom he hath been, or is pleased to work within and upon: and it wholly depends on his most

gracious and powerful operation on the subjects he thus works upon, that what he hath done in them, in regeneration, is manifested and discovered, in its open appearances and acts: so as that we see openly, the same realized to our view, and also what the minds of such and such are. It must be acknowledged, that all the saints spoken of in the Old and New Testament, are all distinguished, as eminent, one for the exercise of one particular grace, the other for a different one. We may esteem them as saints of all graces, as it respected what the Lord had wrought in them; but as personally considered, they only shone in the exercise of particular gifts and graces: so that it was not in them individually, but in them as collectively considered, that all the graces of the Holy Spirit's forming in them, shone forth.

With respect to the evidences of grace in us, as expressed by our apostle, they seem to amount to this—That to say, or think we walk with God, and in communion with him, and at the same time to walk in sin, or in the allowance of any known sin, this is so wholly incompatible with Truth, that such a declaration proves the person who thus speaks to be a liar. So also to say we have not the inherency of sin in us, this is to give the lie to the God of Truth, and to what he hath declared in the Scriptures of Truth. Also to profess to be in the state of grace, whilst we love not one, whom we profess to be a brother in Christ, this proves we are in a state of unregeneracy. It is a truth, that such as abide in Christ, in the true gospel of Christ, in the confession of the Father and the Son, and Spirit, sin not; that is, they are not in a state of sin: they are regenerated ones; nor can they sin the sin against the Holy Ghost, which I believe is particularly intended by these words of the apostle: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." chap. iii. 9. So the many expressions throughout the whole of this Epistle, in the which the children of God, and the children of the devil, are distinguished—The one in their doing righteousness, the other in doing unrighteousness—The one in loving the brethren, the other in hating them—The one in cleaving to the truths and ordinances of the everlasting gospel, the other in a renunciation of the same, so as to follow the antichrists, and false teachers of that day—The one loving every one that is born of God, the other not—The one keeping the commandments of God, the other not. Most assuredly, these were sufficient to distinguish between saints and such as were only professors. And here let the subject rest. The Lord God forbid I should say one word against this, or by any means weaken the same. I would rather neither preach, nor write, than that thus it should be. Yet I would crave your indulgence, whilst I request your attention to what I am going to express. There are some things, and the point which I am going to enter upon is such an one, as that we may safely think, and let others also think, and if we do not all think one and the same, we shall not be greatly injured thereby: this must not be on the great and essential truths of the everlasting gospel: there the least mistake is fatal and momentous: it is not so on some other subjects, although they are and may be connected with it.

Beloved, I am not in myself the least conscious, but that I have to the best of my ability, gone over all and every part of this Epistle hitherto; yet I would say, with regard to the sum-total of these evi-

dences given of internal grace in the children of God, and the distinctions made in it, the apostle with all this does not lead us to build our hope in God, as it respects our eternal state before Him, on any of these; for that is founded wholly and altogether, on his sovereign will, everlasting love, and the good pleasure of his will to us, in Christ Jesus. I therefore conclude it to be worthy of observation, that he wholly treats, and sets forth that which is evidential, that such and such are really the partakers of grace: and if we so understood it, and carried it no further, we should find it to be most truly advantageous and beneficial to our spiritual minds. Beloved, my giving you, or your giving me, a real proof of the grace of God, and of its reality in each other, by our spiritual conversation, and by our tempers and lives, is well, and exceeding good and becoming the gospel. Let it be done, and we receive the same ever so satisfactorily and confidentially into the minds of each other, yet this is wholly distinct from that, which is the ground and foundation of our confidence in God. This is wholly founded on grace without us: not on grace within us. It is wholly built on the revelation which the Lord God hath made of Himself, in the Person, and work of Christ. It is his Person, and finished salvation are the one sole foundation for our faith and hope in God. Is it not so? you will most readily and cheerfully reply, It is even so. May the Lord the Holy Ghost shine, if He please, on what I have now been delivering unto you, so as that it may be beneficial to your renewed minds, and that you may receive profit from the same: this is my real aim, and it contains the whole of my desire. Whilst it is far more easy to treat on doctrinal subjects, than it is on practical ones, yet if any true light may be cast on the mind by means of any thing which I have delivered, according to Truth, the whole praise must be, and that most justly, ascribed unto the Lord. Beloved, I would beg leave to recommend it to your most serious consideration, if any evil can possibly result, from considering all the evidences of grace inherent in us, and that as treated and set before us in and throughout this Epistle, as only evidential to each other, of what our minds are towards the Lord: as also, how far the real knowledge of Divine Truth, hath its influence within us, and upon us; and this, without carrying these subjects so far, as though our eternal state depended hereupon. Not but it will be most readily allowed, that the more firmly we are persuaded of our interest in God's everlasting love, and of our personal union to and interest in the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have the same sealed upon our minds, by the witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, we shall have all and every one of these evidences spoken of throughout this whole Epistle, and it will be confirmed they are in us, and that their effects are produced by us, as so many proofs and divine realities and evidences, that we have been with Jesus: and that He is our Hope of Glory: and that He is in us, and dwelleth in our hearts by faith. Yet our knowledge that He is ours, and that we are in Him, comes from the immediate witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, to our minds. I cannot but request you to consider the subject which hath been delivered. I believe you will find there is nothing in the same, which will weaken any thing contained in and throughout the whole of this Epistle. Your believing your interest in the love and mercy of the Holy Trinity, is founded on the revelation

and knowledge which you have of the same from the word of grace. Your giving evidence of the same to others, is by your lives and conversations. I submit the whole to be considered by you. The Lord be with you. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXVI.

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*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*—I JOHN v. 4.

THE apostle is still in the full pursuit of his one present subject, which he began this chapter with, which consists in this—That such as believe *Jesus to be the Christ*, are born of God—That such as are born of God, love Him, who hath begotten them to Himself by a lively faith and hope in Christ Jesus, and that they also love the children of God. From hence it follows, that hereby we know the children of God, by the open fruits of the new-birth manifested in them, and by them: in so doing we keep the commandments of God: this we manifest in our loving God, and in our observance of and attention to his most holy and revealed will. So to act is the very love of God in us discovered, and his commandments are neither grievous nor burthensome. Love makes the feet of saints, to run with alacrity in the ways of God: this is, as it respects saints, an universal case: hence it follows; *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* In speaking on these words, I would notice the following particulars.

1. The universality of the word *whatsoever*, as reaching to all persons, and all cases, and circumstances, the new-born, or the regenerated people of God, could be in: that these were such as overcame the world.

2. I will enquire what we are here to understand in this place by *the world*, and also what is here meant by overcoming it.

3. How saints gain a victory over the same: this is by faith. What this faith is, as also whose it is, shall be enquired into. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* I am in the beginning of this discourse.

1. To take notice of the universality of the word *whatsoever*, as here used, as reaching to all persons, and all cases and circumstances, the new-born, or the regenerated people of God can be in, let them be high or low, let them be rich or poor: these were such, and ever will be found to be such as overcome the world; *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.*

The word *whatsoever*, as here used by our apostle, respects all who are born of God, let their quality and station, circumstance, and situation be what they may, in this present time state, yet this is a truth in the which they are all interested, and by the which they are all, each, and every one of them manifested. And it is on this account, I would speak of the universality of the word, as here made use of; because I understand it as it concerns all the called people of God, and this as it respects their condition and circumstances in life. If it was not thus designed, the word *whosoever* might have been used; and which hath been the case, over and over, when the apostle hath been speaking of regeneration, and of such and such being the children of God. He is not here speaking on these subjects: he is here speaking on the blessed fruits and effects hereof: *For whatsoever (person) is born of God*, let his quality and station in life be what, and as it may, he it is which *overcometh the world*. Let this be here attended unto—Regeneration is where it is wrought, equal and all alike: it produceth the same fruits and effects as it respects the essentials of godliness: there is no difference here. It is not drawn forth into act and practice in all alike; neither is it possible it should be: there being particular duties to be practised, and particular graces to be exercised, according to such times, and places, and circumstances as are personal, and not universal. Yet that which the apostle is here upon, all the regenerate are alike concerned in: none of them are exempted. No; not one: that is, they are not according to what he here delivers concerning them. He makes it the universal characteristic of them all: saying, *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*. It is those, let them be of which sect, or of whatever quality, and circumstances, as they may be distinguished by the providence of God, in this present time state, who only can, who only do overcome the world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, it is only the new-born can overcome these: and even this can only be done in the Name of Jesus, in the faith of Jesus, and in the strength of Jesus. And it is because the Lord Jesus Christ hath in his own Person, by his life and by his death, obtained a complete and final victory over these for his people, that they overcome: nor do they at any time overcome these, by looking at them. It is by looking wholly off, and away from them: and even then the victory is only obtained, by their looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith. We shall never overcome ourselves, by looking within ourselves, nor at what we are. It must be by looking at Christ, who is both God and Man in one Person, and at what we are in Him: this alone will, and it is all-sufficient to raise us above ourselves—To lift us out of ourselves—To take us off our own standing, and lift up our hearts to the Lord. So it can only be as we look to Jesus as the Sacrifice for sin, and are led into believing views, and gospel apprehensions of the same, that we can overcome the guilt of sin, and the condemnation of the broken law. It is even so as it respects our besetting sins: we cannot overcome them by prayer, nor by our attendance on any of God's holy ordinances. No: there is no virtue in them; it is alone by looking unto Jesus, our inward lusts are brought under and subdued, and this is done effectually, and we are more than conquerors over the whole body of sin, and that sin let it be what it may, which most easily besets us, when and whilst we look to Jesus the

Captain of our Salvation. The world with all its pomps, honors, riches and pleasures becomes less to us, than nothing and vanity, whilst we are looking to Jesus, and living in real communion with Him. Yea, death itself is not dreaded by us, neither have we any care or fear concerning it, or its seizure of us, whilst we are looking unto, looking at and believing the word of our most precious Jesus, who hath said, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*

It is in the knowledge of Jesus, and in the faith of Jesus, let them be in what circumstance, quality, and condition they may, that they, as regenerated by God, are overcomers of this present evil world, and of every evil and enemy in it. Even their victory over the devil, is by our apostle ascribed to the blood of the Lamb. He, speaking of the saints in their militant state, says, "I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. xii. 10, 11. Thus, whatsoever is born of God, overcometh sin, satan, the world, death, and hell. *And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Whilst all this is the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, yet I do not apprehend it to be precisely the immediate subject the apostle is here speaking of. I will therefore proceed to the next particular proposed, which is this: viz.

2. To enquire what we are here to understand by *the world*, and also what in this place, concerning *overcoming it.* *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* And this will by no means set aside, what hath been delivered under the former head, whilst it will give such a view of the apostle's meaning in the same, as will cast some light on the succeeding verses. What hath been delivered is altogether consonant with apostolic doctrine, yet is not the simple apostolic doctrine, expressed by *John* in the words before us. I therefore conceive, we cannot do him justice, nor the text either, without we institute this enquiry, and also endeavour to open and explain the same.—What we are here to understand of *overcoming the world*; or, what is intended by *the world*; which those immediately spoken to, and of in the words before us, overcame: *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.*

Let me premise the following things, and set the same before you, as they may be calculated to lead into the true apprehension of the subject now before us. The apostle began this chapter, shewing and freely and fully expressing, all contained in the true knowledge, and faith of Christ, as it regarded his Messiahship, that such were born of God: and he shews the fruits and effects which flowed from the same, in the succeeding verses. He is in this, and the following verse, setting forth and describing how the antichrists and false prophets of the then present day, were overcome. The former denied Christ to be the Messiah—Insisting on it he was not the Christ. The latter denied his Divine and Eternal Sonship, as being in the Incomprehensible Essence, One with the Father and the Spirit, co-equal and co-essential with them. Now I do for myself apprehend the apostle is here speaking, how the children of God, such as were born of him, and had the true

faith of Christ formed in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, overcame these apostates, and their false and erroneous doctrines; and in what way, and by what means they were overcomers. He says, *whatsoever is born born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Now it becomes me, to set before you, what is here in this scripture, to be understood, by *the world.* I shall aim to give you a proper view of this from the former chapter. And I hope I shall in so doing, give you scriptural satisfaction. I need not remind you that *the world* as the term is used by the apostle, in and throughout the whole of this Epistle, is variously applied. Sometimes to the whole election of grace: as thus, “Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” chap. ii. 1, 2. It is said of the antichrists and false teachers, in this Epistle—That they were of the world, and their doctrine also. “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” chap. iv. 5. In the 19th verse of our present chapter, the apostle affirms that “the whole world lieth in wickedness.” He must mean, the whole world of sinners out of Christ. Whilst by these general items, it is most clear, that this term *world*, is used to express the whole church of God: that it is also used to express the false doctrines which were vented in the apostle’s time: and the case of all out of Christ, that they were in the arms of the wicked one; yet I need nothing more for your present benefit, but to shew, what may be most agreeable with the apostle’s end and design by the word *world* here, and then of overcoming it. If this be done, so as for it to stand on its proper foundation, this will be to accomplish all which hath been proposed, and also all which can reasonably be expected, and required. I will now bring this point forward, by referring to the preceding chapter, and by quoting some passages from the same: then make brief observation, and leave the same with you for consideration; for I do not mean to force any thing upon you. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know we the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because” he that is in you is greater, or because “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” chap. iv. 1—6.

My observations on the quotations are as follows. Have we not in them the term or word *world* variously applied? It is true the apostle does not explain these distinctions. He leaves them with us, to make our observations on the same. When he says, *many false prophets are gone out into the world*, he must mean their going from place to place: this must respect *the world*, our habitable earth, on the which we dwell. When he says, *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them*, he must mean, that they were in heart and mind, with all carnal hearers and professors—That their

doctrines were earthly, sensual, and devilish—That they were wholly adapted to such who were enemies to Christ, and who were of the spirit of the world. The apostle's saying, *the world heareth them*, is most fully expressive, that they were unregenerated, and earthly-minded persons, who were the hearers of those false prophets; who having apostatized from the Truth, drew away disciples after them. As who these were, and what these were, and what they preached, hath been fully declared in Sermons on each of these verses quoted, I shall not here speak of the same. All I have to ask is, if it does not clearly shine forth, that by the term *world*, the very doctrine which these preached is to be understood? I think this most evidently appears: and it appears to me confirmed by these words; *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* Now it fully appears so to me, from laying all these quotations together, and go forward to our text, which reads thus: *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*; that *the world* in our text, respects the false and deceitful antichrists, errors, and heresies which then abounded; and by the which the true gospel of Christ was by gainsayings withstood: and none but real saints were kept from falling into error, and heresy. It might therefore be well spoken by the apostle, for the support of faith, and consolation of the spiritual mind, *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* If I am right, then the overcoming error and heresy, with all and every thing which is contrary to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, is to overcome the world: and this in an especial manner designed here. And taking it for granted I am justified in this view of the subject, from the quotations given, which I conceive will be fully confirmed by the succeeding verse, I proceed to my next particular, which is to shew

3. How saints gain a victory over the world. This is by faith. What this faith is, as also whose faith it is, shall be enquired into. Which I hope will cast light on the mind, so as to tend to mutual profit and spiritual satisfaction. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

Such as were the beloved of God, and born again, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for life and salvation, overcame the world, the flesh, and the devil. This was the case in *John's* day: it is the same in the present day: it will continue to be the same down to the very end of time. The saints of whom our apostle is here speaking, may well and most justly be styled men of renown; for they had peculiar enemies, and notorious errors to oppose; yet they overcame. Not only the whole world which lieth in wickedness, but even false professors; who with all they had to say of Christ, and for Him, had imbibed and received into their minds the very essence of error; for what could more completely sap the whole foundation of the gospel, than the denial of his Messiahship, Person, and Godhead? The apostle speaks of being born



of God, as the grand and alone preservative from all such cursed delusions. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.* Not only in its sensual and sinful customs, but also in the various doctrines, as well as the natural maxims which are kept up, and maintained by the men of it. There is no one thing in this our world the devil hates, as he doth the everlasting gospel. It is his very master-piece to corrupt it therefore as much as he possibly can. Whilst he hates the holy precepts and commandments of it, yet it is the true and simple doctrine of the grace of God, revealed in it, which he hates. So as he has invented, and still does invent a scheme which so nearly resembles it, that he gains upon the minds of many to receive it; which when they have once done, he still so works by the same on their minds, that they would not give it up; No; not for all this world, nor the world to come either. The apostle *Paul* says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. The devil hath his false christ. He set him up in direct opposition to God's Christ, and that toward the close of the apostolic day. He so set him forth, as to draw multitudes after him. He so set on the descriptions given of his false christ, as filled the minds both of the preachers and hearers of the same, as raised them up into wonderful ecstasies and ravishments of spirit. So as that the ærial visions and enjoyments which they had, under the influences Satan impressed on their minds, served to delude them more and more, and strengthened and confirmed them in their errors, and heresies. In our day we are not careful enough, nor so concerned for the doctrines of the gospel as past saints have been. There are abundance of persons, whom Satan deceives with false joys. I have no doubt but he does so in the very article of Death; for most assuredly, nothing short of dying in Christ, and in gospel views of Him, can be true blessedness. But you will say to me, how are you wandering? I thought you had proposed to give us an account, in what the saints' victory over the world consisted. I did so: and hope so to do. I have already said enough to express, that by overcoming the world, in the apostle's meaning, consisted, and it still consists, in overcoming all, and every false doctrine, concerning the Person, Messiahship, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The persons born of God, who lived as contemporaries with the apostle—this is what he had to say of them, that they were overcomers, of all the antichristian party, and all the antichristian doctrines of that day. He ascribes all this to their being born of God. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* I have therefore to explain this victory over the world: and afterwards give an account of the means whereby it is the saints gained this victory; which is said to be our faith. The victory which is here the subject, belongs to saints alone. It is over the world: and they are triumphant in their victory over the same—All the false doctrines and heresies which ever have yet been in this our world, and have been propagated by false teachers in every age, and throughout all past generations. The new-born; that which is born of God, overcometh the world. Beloved, there are the same errors and corruptions of Truth, and the same withstandings and oppositions against it, there ever were. It is only whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.

The *Antitrinitarianism* of the day: or be it *Arianism*, or be it *Sabellianism*, or *Tritheism*, or *Socinianism*, or *Arminianism*, or *Quakerism*, or *Antinomianism*; none of these errors and heresies are overcome, but by such as are born of God. *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world*: and all those mentioned are of the world. *And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

I will therefore enquire what this faith is, whereby we overcome the world. And also whose faith this is. It is here said to be ours. *And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Now the question follows, what faith is this? To which I reply, the faith of Jesus. By which I mean, that faith of Him, and his great Salvation, as results from the scriptural knowledge of Him imparted to the spiritual mind, by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is this alone, by which the saints in the apostle's days overcame the world: the various antichrists, false prophets, and every doctrinal error, and heresy. And it must be by the same word of Truth we must overcome all the *isms*, what sort or kind soever they may be, which are opposite and contrary to sound doctrine. As for example; we cannot believe what is revealed in the Scriptures concerning the Person and Godhead of Christ, and be *Arians*; neither can we receive into our minds, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, as revealed and stated in the Bible, and be *Sabellians*. Let it be observed *Sabellius* lived in the third century. He, in opposition to those who denied the Son to be co-equal with the Father, ran into this extreme—he would admit of no distinction, between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, save only in our conception, and in name and denomination; holding but one Person in Deity, and that the same hath different names, and denominations given unto him, and therefore is called sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Ghost. So that hereby the Trinity of Persons, in the incomprehensible Essence was completely denied. As for the *Tritheists*, they maintained, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were three eternal spirits essential distinct: which in fact was asserting there were three Gods. Now it is by the true knowledge of the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, and in the exercise of the spiritual mind, in a right apprehension of the same, that the church of Christ obtains, and hath victory over doctrinal errors, and heresies. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* As I have stated the subject, it is real belief in the true articles of our most holy faith, is the means whereby we overcome the world, in all its false prophets, and by the which we gain victory over them, in all their delusive errors and heresies. So the next thing to be enquired into is, whose faith is this? It is here said to be ours. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* By our faith, I understand the whole true faith of the church of Christ: which is wholly built upon Divine revelation: is received into the regenerate mind, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: it is the foundation of the whole universal faith, of the saints of the Most High: and is expressed by the apostle to shew, that the whole church of the living God are one and the same in their love and attachment unto it. Thus I have endeavoured according to the gift and ability received from the Lord, to go through my text. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* If you add the following scriptures, I think you must yield to the interpretation

I have given. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Rev. xii. 11. May the Lord give us understanding in all things. Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXXVII.

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*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—1 JOHN v. 5.*

THE apostle is pursuing this great, vast, and important subject, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And this he does in opposition to all the false assertions and doctrines which were then abroad in the professing world, concerning Him. He entered on a solemn assertion in the beginning of this chapter, that such as truly believed the Messiahship of Christ, were most assuredly born of God. Their loving him who begat them to himself, and their loving all such as had true faith in the same Christ with themselves, were real evidences for them, that they were the partakers of the faith of God's elect. It was hereby an outward proof was given, that they loved God and kept his commandments, none of which were grievous to them. It was the love of God in their hearts, was their motive, and that which excited them to the obedience of faith. He observes that whatsoever person is born of God, overcometh the world. He gives an account how the victory is obtained. It is by faith. And here he is disposed to complete his subject: which he does by asking a question, which is this; *Who is he that overcometh the world?* To the which he replies himself; saying, No one can overcome the world, *but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.* He that overcometh the world, must be the same who was spoken of in the preceding verse: in the which the apostle expressed himself thus: *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:* the object of which is here expressed—It is *Jesus the Son of God:* and not simply as Messiah and Saviour, but as He is in his Essential and Divine Person, in his relation to God. I think the former with this verse linked together, will cast light upon what I have delivered in explaining it, and confirm the same, and also add lustre to it. These words, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* divide themselves into a question, to which an answer is immediately returned. I therefore think it will be best to speak of them under these two particular heads, and make no other division of them. And together therewith connect that which will be found necessary to open, explain, and confirm the same. I will therefore

1. Put the question. *Who is he that overcometh the world?*

2. The answer unto it. None: no, not one *but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.*

It must of necessity be the case, that many things which have been already treated of and expressed, must be repeated; or, there cannot be a right interpretation given. I conceive it must be so, in all persons who go through what we style Expository; or much of the meaning of the sacred writer must be lost. Whilst it seems to me, that these words stand so closely allied to the former verse, that we could not well do without it; yet the apostle is here introducing these, with a view of what he designs to bring forward, concerning our Lord's being the true Messiah, and also the witness which was borne by the three witnesses in heaven, and the three on earth, to this—That Christ is the Son of God, and that there is eternal life in Him, and that he who hath the true knowledge of Christ, hath eternal life: but these come afterwards, they are not what concerns the opening of our present text; yet these may be found as that and the true subjects which issue from the same. But I will now aim to come to the

1st Part of the text, which contains this very important question, *Who is he that overcometh the world?*

It must be of necessity acknowledged, this is very closely connected with all preceding, and more and most especially with the former verse, which reads thus: *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* In my Sermon on the same, I particularly describe what the *world* is that is overcome, and lay a great emphasis, that the persons who had victory over it, were those who were so truly instructed and taught the true knowledge of Christ, his Person, his gospel, and the mysteries of the same, as that they overcame the false christs, with the false doctrines concerning Him, in that day of error, and corruption of the Truth. The inference from which was this, that none taught of God, let the age in the which they lived be what it may, would be permitted to fall into, or embrace, or live, and die in the acknowledgment of anything contrary to sound doctrine. This is the substance of that which closed the former Sermon, and which seems to be confirmed by our present text, which begins with asking this question, *Who is he that overcometh the world?* against the which must of necessity be placed, what are we to understand by overcoming the world? To the which it may be replied, the world spoken of in the former verse, in the which it was declared, *whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Then it must issue into this focus—That the *world* overcome, must be, and absolutely was, the world of false prophets, heresies, and antichrists: and it must still bear, and contain the same meaning in it. Then our present words still lead us farther into the subject; and serve to open and explain the same unto you, so far as you are intellectually enlightened into the subject. So that here the question put by the apostle, *Who is he that overcometh the world,* not only comprehends all the temptations of the devil, and his workings by his various instruments upon both body and mind, with all other evils, miseries, and enemies which we are called upon to resist, and which we cannot get the least victory over, but by faith in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone; but he is here more especially speaking of overcoming antichrist; who in the apostle's age worked immediately against the Person of Christ: and this in the following way—Both in a direct and full denial that the true Christ had yet appeared;

and then, as the consequence of this, that Jesus of Nazareth had no true claims to Godhead; that therefore He could not be, what He asserted He was, *the Son of the living God*. Now to confute both these errors, a great part of this Epistle is levelled; and the words before us, in a very particular manner. And great emphasis is laid on the true and right belief of these important verities. It really amounts to this—That there is no man can be right with God, who does not believe in Christ and concerning his Person, but exactly, and correspondently with the revelation made of Him, and the account given of Him in the Sacred Scriptures. I might here most justly say, what ignorance and darkness must it be, that many of such, as are in their way, most extraordinarily religious, and value this Epistle because as they think and say, so much of the Holy Spirit's work, which he works inherently in the minds of saints is spoken of in it; and yet these very persons entirely and altogether overlook the whole which is said, in and throughout the same, concerning the Person, Messiahship, and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely it not only argues, but it also proves with demonstration, that there may be a great profession of Christ and his gospel, even by those, and in such persons, as Christ never was yet, to any good purpose in all their thoughts. This is a most solemn truth: it is also a solemn consideration; yet I do not know what a saint of the Most High hath to do with it, except to admire the Sovereignty of grace: to fall down before it, and submit unto it: for we cannot alter it. To overcome the heresies which have been, and still are, and these as they concern the Person of Christ—the only victory over them is faith: which as I expressed in the former Sermon, is that faith, by the which we receive from the scriptures of Truth and by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, the true knowledge of the Person of Christ into our minds: in the which knowledge, life eternal is contained. And this wheresoever it is received, can never be obliterated: it is the beginning of life everlasting.

Now in the way our apostle puts the question, *Who is he that overcometh the world*, it is designed personally. The question put, could not fail most assuredly of drawing out the saints, to be very desirous for to receive from the apostle himself, a full answer and reply unto it. I suppose that where there is judgment equal to the same, there can be no better mode of conveying instruction, than that of question and answer. It is adopted in several parts of the New Testament. Here in this place, it hath its particular use, because it leads to the determination of the question, by one, who was as to doctrine infallible. We have therefore the greatest reason we possibly can to submit unto his decision. As the whole world of professors, as we may so say, were carried about, and most awfully influenced by the false christs, and false doctrines, proposed by false preachers in the apostle's day; it is even so in our's. There can be but one Truth; yet the errors about it may be many. We are all fond of novelty; now the Truth of Christ will not admit of this. There will never be a new revelation made of Christ: nor will there ever be any addition thereto: it would be well, if this were rightly and scripturally understood. The love of the Holy Trinity will never be to the elect, but what it is: it will never be reflected upon them, either in time, or eternity, but in the Person of Christ. His Person is immutable. He cannot love beyond what he doth. He cannot express it beyond what he hath done. He cannot express more in his promises, than is

contained in them: when the Holy Ghost is most graciously pleased to give the knowledge of this, and to realize the truth of the same to our mind, it is then we are brought to a true point, and proper centre. It is a most inestimable blessing to have the true knowledge of the Person of Christ: right and scriptural apprehensions of the love of Christ: clear views of the most perfect, everlastingly finished, and complete salvation of Christ; and of the immutable grace expressed and contained in the exceeding great and precious promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are contained in the everlasting gospel of the grace of God. To be led by the Holy Ghost into each of these subjects; to enter distinctly and properly into the same; to digest them in our minds, and to hold fellowship by means of the same with Christ, in our hearts, through the grace of the Eternal Spirit—this is christianity and true godliness. Yea, to esteem it to be so, abstracted from the blessed effects of it in our own souls, is of itself, a real evidence of grace; because, such is the darkness of the unrenewed mind, that it hath not the least idea of this: much less that herein grace consists. But that I more immediately may pursue the subject of my text, I must say, though it hath been again and again expressed, the church of Christ in the apostle's time, was most especially plagued with such as denied Christ had been in the flesh. He therefore to distinguish between true believers, and such heretics, says, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* That is, he, who believed *Jesus of Nazareth* was the *true Christ*, or *Messiah*, it was manifest from that very faith and confession, that he was on the Lord's side. And this true Messiah being God as truly as he was Man, so true faith in Him was further manifested, by believing and confessing Him to be what He was in his Divine Person, *the Son of the living God.*

In the former chapter, in verse 15, the apostle had pronounced this great and very important truth, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God:" which whilst it is different in expression, yet it is very congenial in substance and design with this before us. The one expresseth the outward confession of this great truth, with the inward and divine blessedness which was concomitant thereon, as our present scripture more immediately expresses Christ as the Son of God, as the immediate object of our faith, and the subject of our confession and profession. Now the apostle's question, *Who is he that overcometh the world*, implies that some there are which do. And this overcoming is by faith, which is contrary to the false faith which is overcome thereby. And it being the public faith of the whole church, it must of necessity be concerned with and founded on all the articles of faith set before the children of God in the sacred volume of inspiration; I cannot therefore conclude but a proper statement of the truth we are now upon, hath been given in explaining the former words, *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and that this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* And our present text informs us, what that faith consists in, by the which the world is overcome. *Who is he that overcometh the world?* Let this be the question. It is not he who is one of it. No; it is a man in Christ. How does he overcome it? Not by looking at it, and falling in love with it. No; neither does he overcome it by an access to the throne of grace: neither does he, by a life of holiness, and a conversation according to the gospel—It is by *faith*: which faith will produce its proper fruits

and effects; yet faith alone without them overcomes the world: for the apostle here says, by way of reply to this question, *Who is he that overcometh the world*, thus, *he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*.

As I have put the question, from the apostle's words, and set them before you according to the best of my slender ability, *Who is he that overcometh the world?* By which I do in an especial manner apprehend, the errors, and heresies, and false doctrines concerning the Person, Godhead, salvation, grace and fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ; so I now proceed to my next particular, which is this:

2. To set forth the answer the apostle himself gives to the question, which he proposes to others, and answers for himself, as being sufficiently qualified for so doing. *Who is he that overcometh the world?* This is the question: in the which the person is spoken of individually. The reply to this is, *he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*. Or, if you will have it exactly and precisely in the apostle's words, without any division, then they are as follows: *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* As thus read, they contain the apostle's account and his definition of a true christian. He is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He believes Him to be a Saviour. He believes in Him for his salvation. He looks to Him for life everlasting. He both in life and death, is looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life: nor is this all: it is the Person of Christ is the object of his faith; and his growing desire, the knowledge of Him as the Son of the living God, as being One in the Essential Essence, of the same Eternity and Godhead with the Father; He is God truly, properly, and of necessity, as the Father and the Holy Ghost. So that the term, Son of God, denotes what he is in Godhead, in his relation to the Divine Father. The relative distinction of the Divine Persons in the Divine Essence, is so far revealed unto us in the word of Truth, as that thereby we are led to know the distinction of the Persons, as that the Father is not the Son, that the Son is not the Father, and that the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son, the which is most clearly ascertained by what is recorded concerning the acts of the Divine Persons, as they respect Christ, everlasting love, election, the covenant of grace, the gift and mission of Christ, salvation by Him, together with the revelation of Christ to us, and forming Him in us, the Hope of glory. In all these acts and displays of grace, in the which the Eternal Three, have been and are pleased to manifest their mutual loves to the Person of Christ, God-Man, and to the persons of the elect, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, the distinction of the Divine Persons, is most clearly manifested. And I think, it is always best for us to believe Christ to be what He is declared to be in the word of Truth, rather than to make any curious enquiries, how he is the Son of God, and why so called. It is enough for me, to know and believe He is so, because God himself hath in the word of inspiration declared He is so. And my belief of this is founded alone, upon God's witness and testimony of the same in the word of grace. Now that Christ is the Son of God, this is the fundamental Truth, laid down by the apostle in the words before us, and which he afterwards improves upon. If it was an essential truth in the apostle's view, and in the days and time in the which he lived, it must be so now. Therefore I should not conceive it safe to drop the receiving, and believing this truth, because we cannot comprehend it by

the utmost stretch of reason. Nor should I think it advisable to explain away the term, *Son of God*, ascribing it to be expressive of an office, and that it is only to express the Son's engagements on our behalf. I think the term and doctrine of Christ's true, proper, and Eternal Sonship, and a full and free confession, in and throughout all the churches of the saints, that our Jesus is in his Divine Person, in the glorious, incommunicable and incomprehensible Godhead, *the Son of the living God* is absolutely necessary and should be maintained and made. It seems to me, that none can deny but that this is the apostle's doctrine in the words before us. And sure I am, none with the Bible in their hands can deny, that Christ is called the Son of God in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Our text says, he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, is an overcomer of the world: that is, he overcomes the errors and heresies concerning the Person of Christ, which, persons left to their own reasonings and prejudices against this holy truth, set forth in the written word, fall into. I think this cannot but be allowed to be a clear explaining of the apostle's meaning.

It is to be observed, to the intent that we may enter fully into the words before us, that as the apostle had before, in the 1st verse of this chapter, spoken of believing Christ to be the true Messiah, so he is here speaking of believing Him as Jesus the Saviour, to be also *the Son of God*: which is without all doubt here done, fully to express, wherein, and by what article of faith, the true church of Christ, and the false church of Christ, were distinguished. The title, *Jesus*, is that of work and office. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. The term *Christ*, or *Messiah*, is expressive of His being constituted by the Father, to be the glorious and only Mediator of reconciliation; and who was qualified and anointed by the Holy Ghost, to accomplish that great work. Hence He said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me" &c. Isa. lxi. 1. And His being in the Godhead, One with the Father, His only begotten, co-eternal and consubstantial Son, he was thereby equal to all undertaken by him in the everlasting covenant; for it is the Godhead of Christ, stamps worth and efficacy on all his acts and performances. Hence it is his blood cleanseth from all sin, because he is the Son of God: on the same account it is, his blood is styled the blood of God; and his life the life of God. These things have been in the course of these lectures so freely and frequently spoken of, that I account it needless to quote chapter and verse here. The various appearances of our Lord, to *Adam*, and the ancient Patriarchs, were so many evidences to them, that He was the Head of his body the church: that He was engaged to be the Saviour thereof; and that He would in due time, freely, and fully accomplish his great undertakings. His several appearances, to *David*, *Samuel*, *Solomon*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and others, in what we may style with great propriety, the age of Prophecy, most fully denoted how he delighted in his church, in the view of his incarnate state, and in what he was to be, and to do, and suffer, to bring his people nigh unto God. Our evangelist, with the other three, gives us such an account of the Son of God, when he became incarnate, as is altogether wonderful and divine: and the faith of the gospel hath the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ for its immediate object. Hence the apostle *Paul* began his ministry with this great article of faith—"That



Christ is the Son of God." Acts ix. 20. The eunuch was baptized upon the confession of this faith in Christ: he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts viii. 37. When the apostle gives us his life of faith, it is in these words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. Our Lord put this question to the man whose eyes He opened: I mean the man that was born blind; "Dost thou believe on the Son of God." John ix. 35. I think it needless to say more, because, if I am not greatly mistaken, the same subject hath been discoursed already. So I am willing to conclude this Sermon thus—That the apostle tenacious of the grand doctrine of the gospel, upon which as its foundation, the whole substance thereof rests, brings in this one great Truth of it, declaring it to be that which essentially distinguished a believer in Jesus, from all others whatsoever—Such an one believes that Christ is God; the true, very, and Essential Jehovah; and rests the weight of his whole salvation, and grounds all his expectations on Christ, in the full belief of his Eternal Godhead. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* It was hereby alone, in the true belief of this Truth, that the antichrists and false prophets, and teachers in the apostle's days were overcome. It is by the belief of Christ's Person, and eternal power and Godhead, the world of false teachers and prophets in every age, can be withstood, and finally overcome. Jesus Christ, from his relation to the Father, and His Unity in the Divine Essence with Him, is styled the Son of God: as according to his human nature, he is the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. And as it respects his work and offices, He is the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Intercessor, and Advocate. Thus I have endeavoured to go through the subject before me, as simply as I might: leaving all out, which did not appear to me, to be absolutely necessary to mention; having in remembrance what *Agur* said of himself, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Prov. xxx. 2—4. To acknowledge, the Person and Godhead of Christ Jesus, is absolutely necessary to salvation. And this may be done, without any explaining how the Second Person in the Essence is what He is, the only begotten Son of God; and that as such, in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead Personally. Whilst I believe this from the authority of the word of revelation, I was never permitted yet, no, not for a single moment, to have one reasoning thought on this subject. I believe it because the Lord hath revealed it, and also because He hath himself testified and borne his witness respecting the Sonship, and co-equality of Christ, as One with Himself and Holy Spirit, in the Essence-existing. I now leave the whole delivered by me, as wholly incomprehensible to reason: yet it is suited to the faculty of faith, and made clear unto it from the word, and by the Spirit. May all saints be kept in the true doctrine and acknowledgment of the Person and Godhead of

*even Jesus Christ.* Thus he speaks of this circumstance which took place, and of which he was an eye-witness, when water and blood flowed from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ after his Passion: and which he only, of all the evangelists, makes mention of. He does this in a very solemn manner. And from the account he gives of the same, in the scriptures which have already been quoted from him, we learn that the whole related was the subject of prophecy. He says, *he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.* And then he quotes these scriptures which were herein, and hereby fulfilled. *For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.* This concerned the command the Lord gave the *Israelites* concerning the *Paschal Lamb*: not a bone of it was to be broken: its allusion was to Christ, as the Antitype. And it was realized in Him, when he being dead on the cross, all the powers of earth and hell united, could not break one of his bones. The apostle quotes the command that not a bone of the Paschal Lamb should be broken. He shews it was fulfilled in Christ: as also concerning the piercing the side of Christ, from whence flowed blood and water, he quotes a scripture from the prophet *Zechariah*, as receiving in part its accomplishment thereby: the words are as follows; "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." *Zech. xii. 10.* But if Christ had not been pierced, this scripture could not have been accomplished: neither could Christ have been looked upon as pierced, if he had not been so dealt with. Now this is as here given by the apostle, one testimony concerning the Messiahship of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; *he came by water and blood.* He gave himself for us; and He gave himself to us. That we might look into his very heart and see all contained in it, he permitted his side to be pierced that we by the orifice made thereby, might view for ourselves that nothing but love, everlasting love existed therein. It is pierced, and what flows from it? *Blood*; by the which his whole church is cleansed, and most pure and clean, even unspeakably so: and *Water*; an emblem of the *Holy Spirit*, in his purifying and sanctifying influences, by the which all the redeemed of the Lord, are completed and fitted for the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the true Messiah. *This is he that came by water and blood*, and all the scriptures were ratified and accomplished in Him, in a most clear, evident manner, and in their fullest degree. *This is he that came by water and blood.* But why is water spoken of first, and the blood afterwards? without all doubt to signify, that upon the piercing of our Lord's side, the water flowed first, and then the blood, and that they were both distinct. The water was distinct from the blood, it being the cooling medium by means of which the heart, the repository of the blood, might be properly kept cool and comfortable. The blood which flowed forth, was all that remained in the humanity of Christ, so that hereby the last drop of it was emptied. O what a Jesus, thus to love, as that both in his life and death, and even when hanging stark dead upon the Tree, he did not leave his Church without the uttermost expressions of his love, and memorials of the same! I will proceed to my next particular, which is this,

2. That Jesus Christ came not by water only, but by blood also.

*This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.*

What is to be conceived, and explained by all this? Why most assuredly, the Incarnation, or our Lord's being made like unto his brethren by his incarnation, must in part be designed by it: and this in direct opposition to the blaspheming antichrists of that day: some of whom would allow no body to Christ but that of an aerial one; and this in direct contradiction to the scriptures of Truth, and to the testimony of the apostles. It was then, and still is, that our blessed Lord, the Christ of God, was in his Person true and very God: it was by his incarnation, which was altogether mysterious and divine, that He descended from his Father's bosom, took our nature into union with his Person, and became true and very man. He could neither have been the sacrifice for sin, nor the Sanctifier of his whole church, had he not been true and very man; as truly so, as He was God: *The Son of God*. The apostle is therefore very particular upon the Person of Christ, and of what he really was in his incarnate state: in the which the truth of his Humanity most fully and convincingly appeared. He lived in our nature; it was by this manifested that He was *the child born, the son given, the true Immanuel, God with us*. Hence the apostle here says, *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood*. In the whole of which he retains the Humanity: and this as fully as he had before expressed the Divinity of our Lord. For which reason I think we should never so treat the subject, as for the Humanity to be swallowed up in Christ's Deity, nor for his Deity to be swallowed up in his Humanity; nor, as I conceive, should these be spoken of so distinctly, and apart, as to separate one from the other; unless it be to prove Christ to be both God and Man. Therefore, as I conceive, we should ever keep in view, and also speak and always declare, that our Lord Jesus Christ in his Person, and in all his relations unto us, is both God and Man in one Person; or which, as I consider the subject in my own mind, is still more comprehensive, that He is God-Man, and from this we should never by any means, nor expression depart. It is, I apprehend, that our apostle speaks of our Lord's Messiahship—To confound the antichrists and false prophets of that age—To confirm the saints; as also to give the most full and clearest evidences of the truth and reality of Christ Jesus being the true Messiah, saying, *This is he*, this is the Son of God, in the faith of whom, he that believeth in his Person and Godhead, overcometh the world; this is even the same, *that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ*.

Here is a remarkable emphasis laid on who this glorious and blessed Messiah was. It was our most precious Lord: who was by Name, work, title, and office, *Jesus Christ*: even He to whom we look for everlasting life, and on whom we place all our hope and expectations for the same. It would be a great and good spiritual acquirement, to have the knowledge of Christ's Person, of his Names and titles, of his work and offices stated in our hearts, as they are set before us in the scriptures: it would be the means in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of promoting our estimation of our most precious Lord, and of promoting and strengthening our communion with Him. The apostle had said, Christ Jesus came by water and blood: in which, as hath already been observed, he refers to

what he himself saw, and was a witness of, and which hath been taken notice of. But he adds by way of illustrating his subject concerning Christ's Messiahship more fully and convincingly, *not by water only, but by water and blood*. Hereby signifying, that Christ in his life and death, was the end of all the ablutions, washings, sprinklings, and expiatory sacrifices of the law, in the whole substance, and economy of the same. This of consequence, was another full proof, that He was the true Messiah, as the whole of it looked unto Him; and the people under it, were by it directed and pointed to look for Him—To look to Him for life and salvation—To view Him in all, and every ordinance thereof. Now the apostle having a true and spiritual apprehension of this, and wanting to convey a most convincing proof and evidence of Christ's Messiahship, such as he had not before given, adds by way of importance and remark, that *Jesus Christ came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood*: and that hereby witness was given on earth, that he was the true Messiah, who was promised to the fathers—Set forth as the one grand end of the levitical law, with the whole dispensation, and all the sacrifices, services, ordinances, priests, washings and sprinklings which belonged unto the same: which rightly apprehended, carried with it its own testimony, and most clearly identified Christ, the Messiah. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood*. Now this is one of the great and grand evidences, which the apostle gives concerning the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—A subject of the greatest importance in the age in which he lived, to the church and saints of the Most High. It was then a recent act—the incarnation, life, sacrifice, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and triumph of Christ over all his enemies, by his Session at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And seeing the whole of this was confronted by the antichrists, and false prophets and teachers in that day, there was therefore the greatest necessity, the children of God, should be fully established in the true knowledge and faith of Christ's Messiahship; this being one of those important truths, which was then withstood and opposed by the whole bulk of worldly professors. There has been, in going over the former parts of this Epistle, a clear and full account of the doctrine of antichrist in *John's* day; and I would refer my reader to look over the same, as he will thereby understand this part of the subject. I would also observe, our apostle establishes the saints in the true knowledge of Jesus the Son of God's being the Messiah, not from the experience which they most certainly had of the same in their own hearts, but he confirms them in the knowledge and faith thereof, from the scriptures themselves. And may I not ask, if the whole Bible in its evidence of Christ's Messiahship, is not summed up and contained in these words? *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth*. I will come to my next particular, which is this;

3. That these, that is, which the apostle had said—*This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood*, bear record of Christ, that He is the true Messiah. And so doth the Spirit also: and that because He is the Spirit of Truth.

I will again recite my text; *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

And here I ask, what is it, which the Spirit as here spoken of as a Witness, bears his witness and testimony unto? I reply, it is to this—That Jesus is the Son of God—That He is the true Messiah—That He came by water and blood—That He is the Saviour of his whole church—That there is eternal life in Him, and that for all his members. The proof of this is fully given, and also confirmed, by the verse going before my text: by the text also: and by the following verses, which may be considered as closed at verse 8th: and the benefits spoken of, are closed with these words, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” v. 12. As the apostle was an eye-witness of the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ, it being pierced after that He was expired on the cross: and as he quoted scriptures, and proved they were accomplished in Jesus the Son of God, nothing could be added to this, as giving more, or fuller proof of our Lord’s Messiahship: and then his saying, *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood*, what is this but in effect to say, Christ was the Antitype of the whole ceremonial ritual: and that as such, He was both the Justifier and Sanctifier of his whole Church. Water being here mentioned first, is not to imply, we are first sanctified, and afterwards justified. It is put first, because it first issued out, and to shew it was not mixed with the blood. They were both separate. And the water could not but come forth first, for this reason; because the spear entering where the water was, that of necessity flowed forth of itself, and the blood followed. So that the whole humanity of Christ, was thus finally drained of its whole humidity. This being the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the Messiah, and the apostle being an eye-witness of blood and water flowing out of his pierced side, as He hung on the cross, a corpse; and also knowing the whole of scripture, both types and prophecies, all referred unto Him—That they were realized in Him, and fulfilled by Him, he might well speak of the same, as so many glorious testimonies of the truth of our Lord’s Messiahship, saying, *This is he*, the Son of the living God, the glorious Messiah promised to the Jewish nation, *that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only*, which would have been but one single witness of him, *but by water and blood*, which is a second witness for Him. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness*, of Him, *because the Spirit is truth*. So that here we have these three, the *water*, the *blood*, and the *Spirit*, which bear witness to the true and proper Messiahship of our Lord Jesus Christ. By *the Spirit*, is meant the Holy Spirit, who is a Witness for Christ; and this both in the Old Testament, and also in the New: in the former he revealed all that He was to be, and do, and suffer: in the New, he testifies of his Person, and Messiahship, and that He is an everlastingly complete, and all-sufficient Jesus. Who by his one offering hath for ever put away sin, and perfected them that are His by the sacrifice of Himself: and so fully obeyed the law, that he hath magnified it, and made it everlastingly honorable. And He presents his whole church, the whole election of grace, the elect of Adam’s posterity, complete in his Person, and finished salvation, before the throne of God.

As *the Spirit* is brought in here, as bearing witness, or testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus, so His *witness* being joined with the *water* and the *blood*, should, as I conceive, direct us to consider, that the prophecies concerning Him, in *the Paschal Lamb*, and that the Jews should *look on him whom they pierced*, were given out from *the Spirit*, and received their complete accomplishment, and it could not be otherwise, *because the Spirit is truth*. Our Lord himself gives the Holy Ghost this title, *The Spirit of truth*. His words are to his disciples these: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 15—17. Our Lord farther says to the same persons, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. Thus Christ and *John* both unite in one and the same testimony concerning *the Spirit*. He is called by both of them *The Spirit of truth*. Christ speaks of Him, as his Glorifier. And the apostle as a *witness* for Him: and that in this very essential point, in the which the Personal, and manifestative glory of Him, as Messiah, was so particularly concerned. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* And He cannot set his seal to that which is not Truth. He bears his testimony to Christ, and every truth of the everlasting gospel, in the word of inspiration. He bears his testimony agreeable to the same, in the hearts and consciences of believers. May what hath been delivered at this time unto you, be followed with His own divine blessing and efficacy to your hearts. Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXXIX.

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*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.—I JOHN v. 7.*

THESE words have been, and still are, controverted and called into question, and as not well authenticated, by all sorts of *Antitrinitarians*, *Arians*, and *Socinians*: and this, under the pretence they are not found in the copies of the New Testament; and therefore, say these adversaries to the Truth, not contained in it, the same is an interpolation. To which a great and learned man thus replies. "True it is, that this text is left out in divers ancient copies of the New Testament. And hence

it is that it is omitted by some of the ancient fathers in their disputes with the *Arians*. But it is as true that many most ancient and best approved Copies retain this Text. *Lucas Burgensis* saith, that in thirty-five old Copies, they found it wanting but in five. And it is quoted by many of the ancient fathers, as *Cyprian*, *Tertullian*, *Athanasius*, and others. Yea, in the council of *Nice*, it was urged by *Athanasius* against the *Arians*, and no exception was then made against it. And this verse was constantly read, and that solemnly as a part of Scripture both in the *Greek* and *Latin* churches. And it is found in all the printed Copies except one. Yea, it is retained and express by the *Socinians* themselves, in their German version printed at *Racovia*, A. D. 1630. And the series of the *context* and scope of the place do necessarily require this verse. For the words of the following verse, *And there are three in earth*, cannot have a right construction, but upon supposition that there are Three also that bear record in heaven, with which these three in earth are connected by the conjunctive particle *and*. Therefore that this *Text* is wanting in some ancient Copies, must be ascribed, either to the carelessness of the transcribers, or, which is more probable, to the fraud and deceit of some *heretics*, who denied the *Son* to be in Essence One with the *Father*. The deceit of heretics, and particularly of the *Arians* in corrupting, and mutilating the Sacred *Text* by their sacrilegious hands, was frequently complained of. And indeed the *Arians* seem to have had too fair opportunities for so doing, when not only divers *Emperors* were *Arians*, but *Arianism* was spread almost through all parts of the known world." I have quoted this from *Mr. William Wishart*, from his discourse of the Trinity of the Persons in the Godhead.

The words of my text are very clearly and closely linked with the words which went before: and the apostle now more fully proves what was expressed in them: viz—That Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and that there is eternal life in Him, for his whole church. He gives six Witnesses as bearing their testimony to the same—Three in heaven, three on earth. This is the subject of this, and the following verse: so that in both of these, we have the fullest proof given, that Christ is the Son of God, and the One only Saviour and Mediator. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*. When it is said these *bear record in heaven*, it is not to be understood as if heaven were the place where they bear record or witness: for the ground and testimony of our believing *that Jesus is the Son of God*, must be some testimony, given us on earth: therefore says a worthy, *in Glory*, it must be connected with the word *three*; so that the words may be read thus, *There are three in heaven bear record*: and these three are One in Unity, in bearing witness to the same truth, and also One in the same incomprehensible Nature. There are who think these words of our apostle, are founded on the following Scripture. "I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: the word that I covenanted with you, so my spirit remaineth among you." see Hag. ii. 4, 5. It is to be observed that the learned say, the supplementary words are not in the original, and therefore they read them as I have quoted them. I would just observe the difference of phrase in this and the next verse. Here it is, *these three are one*: in the next verse, concerning the three witnesses on earth, it is said of them, *and these three agree in one*.

I will now by the Lord's permission enter on the text: and then proceed to divide it, and give the statement of it—As who these witnesses are, what their testimony is, and how we ought to receive the same, and give full assent and consent thereto. If I am carried scripturally and becomingly through this, I shall have much, yea, even abundant reason to be thankful: because the subjects now before us, are indeed the deep things of God. These words, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*: contain a glorious account of the doctrines of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, in the which their Divine Persons are fully expressed, and their Unity of Existence in the incomprehensible Godhead is most divinely ratified. Yet I am not going to treat at this time, on that most important subject: there is a Sermon of mine, in a book entitled, “An Essay towards an unfolding the Glory of Christ,” Vol. I.; in the which, (Sermon I.) I have, so far as I am acquainted with the Scriptures of Truth, fully declared my apprehensions of this great point. I therefore shall here confine myself to the connection of these words, and what is testified in them, concerning the witness which the Three in Godhead are here said to bear. I will on this account shut up the words thus; that they contain, agreeable with the whole Book of God, this most divine truth—That in the Godhead there are, and do by Essential Union, exist and co-exist, Three Divine Persons, styled in the words before us, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one* in the same Essence: not One in Personalities, but One in the Self-Existing Godhead. I would aim to explain the rest of my text, by casting it into the following division. As

1. Who those Witnesses are, that are here mentioned, and their number. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and observe their unity in their witness. And these three are one.*

2. What their witness and record which they bear is. This is to be gathered from the context.

3. That it becomes us to receive this record and testimony, which these Witnesses bear; for to receive the same, is to set to our seal that God is true. If the Lord will be pleased to guide me, in the truth of each of these particulars, I shall have abundant cause for thankfulness to the Divine Majesty; and hope to bless and praise his most holy Name for the same. And now, in an entire dependence on Him, I go forward, and hope in his Name and fear, to open the first head of this discourse, which is this;

1. To express and set forth, who those Witnesses are, that are here mentioned, and their number, and where they bear their testimony. The words of the text are, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* They are so in the Essence-Existing. They are so in their one assent and consent, in their will, and testimony in what is here particularly designed.

The Witnesses are the Eternal Three, *Father, Word, and Spirit.* When it is here said of them, that they bear witness in heaven, it is so said because they are heavenly Witnesses. It has been already observed, the words may be read, *There are three in heaven bear record.* This they do by glorious fruits and effects, proper to each of the Three



Persons in the One glorious and undivided Essence; and these are, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*. God the Father bore his testimony to Christ at his Baptism; He also renewed the same at the Transfiguration, saying by an audible voice, which whilst it came from Heaven, was heard upon earth, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark i. 11. "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Luke iii. 22. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17. The Father renewed this same testimony concerning Christ, when he was transfigured. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. xvii. 5. see also, John i. 32—34. The words are these, "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." Christ the Essential Word, bore his testimony to the same immutable truth, testified of by the Father. He on all occasions declared Himself to be the Son of God: this He did by word, and miracles. He, the Essential Word, and Son of God, bore witness of Himself, and to Himself, as incarnate. This seems to be contained in that reply to the cavil of the Pharisees about this matter. "Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." John viii. 19. Christ bore testimony of his Person, and Messiahship: at *Jacob's well*, the woman having said, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things," He immediately rejoined, "I that speak unto thee am he." John iv. 25, 26. So on another occasion he said, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.—My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." John x. 15, 27—30. The Holy Ghost became Witness, to the truth of the Divine Father's declaration concerning Christ; by his visible descent on the apostles on the day of *Pentecost*: as also by his visible descent on Christ himself, at his Baptism: and also on others, see Acts viii. 17, and x. 44; whereby He testified of Christ, which was agreeable to what the Lord Jesus had fore-signified, John. xv. 26. Thus the Three in heaven, have borne their witness, and record on earth. They were one in their witness and record. There is the most perfect unity in the same: it is one will, one assent; it contains the greatest evidence which can be given, of the reality and truth of that which they bear witness of, and record unto. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* Our Lord speaking to the Jews says, "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." John viii. 17, 18. But we have Three Witnesses in the words before us, and each of them Essentially Divine. *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.* And this number is all-sufficient; it

being the record and testimony, of each of the Divine, coeternal and co-equal Persons in the One glorious and unspeakable Godhead. I will proceed to my next particular :

2. To shew what the witness and record is, which the Holy Three bear testimony of. And as the text itself, and in itself is of such vast importance, I will repeat it. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.* And this is to be gathered from the context.

These words are connected with the former verse ; in the which the apostle had expressly declared and proved the Messiahship of Christ ; saying most remarkably, *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* The water, blood, and Spirit, are here produced as Witnesses of Christ's Messiahship. Then he adds, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.* So that the Holy Three are here spoken of, as confirming the same testimony with the water, and the blood, and the Spirit, which had been mentioned in the former verse. Both these verses as united, serve as one grand suffrage to illustrate these great truths ; which as connected, are the substance of the whole contained in the context, which concerns the Person, Sonship, Messiahship and Salvation of the Lord. The Witnesses here spoken of, are Personal and distinct. What they bear witness of, and bear record unto, is now to be expressed and declared. And the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, witness and bear record in the everlasting gospel, to the truth of all which is revealed therein : and this in a most especial manner, as it concerns their love to Christ, God-Man, and to the whole election of grace in Him : as also to the glorious display, and open declaration of the same, which the Three in Jehovah have manifested by their glorious Personal appearances : some of which, under the present head, shall be taken notice of. As we read our text as it is printed in our Bibles, *For there are three that bear record in heaven,* I would say of it as so expressed, we may understand it thus—That, the Holy Trinity may be considered, as bearing witness to each other, and to us, of their own acts of infinite grace. And of their covenant transactions in the high court above ; concerning the infinity of grace, and their transactions before all time. I know not how to express myself, so as to be understood on this subject, so as to be properly understood, better, than by observing, that the *Cherubim* in the Holiest of All, were a Memorial of the Three in Jehovah, in their economy of grace. And that the faces of these, were continually fixed on the Mercy-Seat. A type of Christ the Propitiation. So that it may with the greatest safety and truth be said, in this there was a glorious expression of the Three in Heaven, bearing continual remembrance of their covenant acts with each other, on the behalf of the whole church of elect men.

The terms by which the Holy Trinity are here expressed, should not be omitted : they are, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.* It looks as if the apostle's eye had been fixed on the words of Christ, which he hath commanded his own ordinance of Baptism in ; not in the Name of One of Three Names : but into an acknowledgment of Three distinct Persons in One incomprehensible Essence, whose Three Names, by the which they have been pleased to reveal themselves, and their Personal

relations to each other, as coequally One in the Godhead, are those of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. And the article is prefixed to each of these. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, are the words appointed by our Lord himself, in the which the ordinance of Baptism is appointed and commanded to be administered. And in them we have the order in the which the Three in the Self-Existing Essence exist by Necessity of Nature. Nor is there any other Scripture in the whole book of God, in which their order of Existence in the Divine Nature, is thus regularly stated. And as the great *Dr. Gill* says, that which distinguishes the Divine Persons in the Essence, must of necessity be Essential, and as Essential as that Essence is: for all of God is God. And the whole Godhead consists in Self-Existence. Personal and Relative Subsistences, and infinite Perfections, from whence Essential Blessedness originates. In my text we have the Divine Trinity of Persons, expressed as our Lord doth in Matt. xxviii. 19; *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*: here is only the alteration of one word: instead of *the Son*, it is *the Word*: a term which *John* greatly delighted in. He began his gospel with it, and describing Christ, the Conqueror of all the enemies of his church, he saith, "his name is called, The Word of God." Rev. xix. 13. Our Lord when he speaks to the church of *Thyatira*, says, "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire," &c. Rev. ii. 18. The form of expression, *These things saith the Son of God*, is it not equal with a *Thus saith the LORD!* Most assuredly it is. I do not mean that I can rightly open, and clearly explain these glorious subjects now before us: If I could, it would cast light, and add lustre thereto; as it would lead us more clearly to apprehend what is here declared, and set before us, and give and convey to our minds, clear and scriptural apprehensions of the same. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*.

As they are here spoken of as Witnesses; and as what the witness, and record is, which they bear testimony of, is to be expressed under this present head of discourse, so it may be necessary to open the word *record*, as to that which is here implied and expressed by the same. It is acknowledged by some, that the word rendered *record*, is the same as that which in the next verse is rendered *witness*. Therefore I have used the term *witnesses*, and *witness*, as being congenial with the truth and nature of the subject before us. If we have the word *record*, as that is in the present text, it most assuredly is expressive of, and it expresses unto us the joint assent and consent, that the Three in heaven bear in the sacred Scriptures to the following truths—That Jesus is the Son of God: the true Messiah: the One alone Saviour—That his Salvation is most complete—That there is eternal life in Him—That it is communicated and bestowed on the elect—That all who have the true knowledge of Him, have it in their own souls—That they may rely on it as immutable Truth, seeing God hath made a free grant of it unto them, in his holy gospel. As it respects the terms, *Father, Word, and Holy Ghost*, here mentioned in my text, they lead us to consider, the relation the Three in Jehovah stand in, to each other. The term *Father* must have relation to what he is to the Son. The term *Word* here used by the apostle, is expressive of what the Second Person in the Essence is, as Personally, and

manifestatively considered. He is God's *Essential Word*: a Person in the Essence, distinct in Personality from the Father, and the Spirit. As he is in both Testaments styled *the Word* and *the Word of the LORD*, so let it be observed, that like as words are the index of the mind, and are agreeable with the conceptions of it, so as to be the true expressions thereof, and thereby we make manifest what is in ours: so by the *Essential Word*, who is Personally distinct from the Father, He hath been pleased to make known his whole mind and will, in creation, providence and grace. The Father spoke the world into being and existence by Him. He hath in Him, made known to the uttermost, all He is, in love, grace, and mercy, to his beloved ones, in Him. He is therefore styled, *The Word*. The term, *Holy Spirit*, or *Holy Ghost*, belongs to Him, whom we frequently style, *the Third Person in God*. It is very expressive of what He is Personally, and Essentially, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, by incomprehensible procession. These Three who are by Essential Union with the Godhead, and Oneness in the incomprehensible Essence, one and the same in Godhead, who exist Personally and co-equally in the Unity of the Essence, as *Father, Word, and Spirit*, have in a very extraordinary manner, borne their joint testimony to this truth, here upon earth—That Christ is the Son of God—And that there is eternal life in Him, for every one that believeth. This *record* is in the Scriptures of Truth. The Holy Three at all times, bear their joint testimony thereto: and this, so far as I understand the same, is the true and substantial meaning of the words before us. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*: One in Essence: One in Unity, testimony, record, and witness to that which they bear record unto, concerning Christ, and Salvation by Him, as revealed and recorded in the word of grace. I go on to the following particular proposed, which is this:

3. To shew that it becomes us to receive this record and testimony, which these Witnesses bear, to the truths which have been mentioned: for to receive the same, is to set our seal that God is true: and in so doing we glorify the Divine Persons so far as we possibly can, this side heaven. May the Lord be pleased to guide me scripturally through this closing particular. Amen.

As it respects the Unity of the Divine Essence, the Persons in the Essence, their Personal relations to each other: it is fully revealed in the word of Truth; so far as it concerns us, and no further. And all this is sealed by the appearances and manifestations, which the Holy and Eternal Three have been pleased from time to time to make of the same. Thus also, as it regards their will, love, grace, delight in the Person of Christ, God-Man, and to the elect of *Adam's* posterity in Him; with all their grace in Him towards them, together with his great salvation wrought out for them, with all that the Father hath made Him to be unto them: this is all so fully revealed in the word of Truth, that he who runs may read. And all this is also, each and every distinct particular of the same, ratified and confirmed by the joint record and testimony of each of the Persons in the Trinity. Our apostle therefore, having a clear and comprehensive view and knowledge of all this, being come almost to the close of his Epistle, gives an item to the saints universally of this. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and*

*the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.* What can exceed this ! The whole Bible is the Father's record and witness for Jesus—That He is his ordinance of Salvation and life everlasting. That none, let them have been, or be they at this present instant in themselves, or in their frames and feelings what they may, yet the Lord the Spirit inclining their hearts, and giving them wills to come to Christ—such He will not cast out, but they shall find in Him, and receive from Him all the blessings of life eternal. Our Lord Jesus Christ saith, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may (rather, shall) have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day." John vi. 37—40. To receive into our minds, and believe in our hearts, the truths contained in all this, is to receive the record and testimony, which these Witnesses expressed in our text bear : and we may so do with the utmost safety, seeing it is Christ himself who pronounced this ; and he says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed." v. 27. So that our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sealed by the Father, whom he here styles, *God the Father*, and was filled with the Holy Ghost, immediately before his entrance on his great work, for the performance of which, he received his mission and commission from the Father, spake and acted in every particular, agreeable with his Father's will, and this under the anointings and broad Seal of the Holy Ghost. All which as properly considered, is a full testification, that the whole Trinity who united in the salvation of the elect before all time, and expressed the same in council and covenant before the world began, do delight in bearing their testimony and witness, in the sacred volume of inspiration, of their infinite and everlasting delight in the Person, and finished work of the ever-blessed Immanuel, and also in every one who is well pleased with Him. And what greater satisfaction can we have, than the record and witness of *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost* to this, which is set forth, as it respects the truth and substance of all of it, in every page of the word of inspiration. Surely, if he that hath received Christ's testimony of what Christ had seen and heard, in the councils of the Three in heaven before the world was ; and which, he became incarnate that he might make known to us ; if "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true:" see John iii. 33 ; then it must be a glorious way, in the which we give and ascribe glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in receiving their record and witness, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and salvation as already completed in Him, and by Him into our hearts : for to receive the same, agreeable to their record and testimony is to set honour on them. Yea, it is more than this ; it is setting our seals to the Truth of God : and setting our seals that God is true. I will go no farther on here, lest I should spoil the subject. I will leave you who may either hear, or read what is thus feebly delivered, to think closely on the subject. May the Holy Ghost be your Teacher ; and guide us, if it please him, with his own influence

and by his own inspiration into the knowledge, glory, reality, and grace of the subject: so as that believers in Jesus, may find a real feast in the same. The Lord pardon all my imperfections in going through it, and lead you who are his, into communion with Himself. Grant this, O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, to the honour and glory of thine own free and sovereign grace. Even so, Amen.

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## SERMON LXXX.

---

*And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.—*

I JOHN v. 8.

IN the former verse we had the Three in heaven, *Father, Word, and Holy Ghost* bearing their testimony that Christ is the Son of God—That He is the true Messiah—That eternal life is in Him: and He is this to all who are enabled to believe on Him. In this verse, we have three more witnesses who bear their joint testimony to this same, invariable, essential, and important truth: even the same mentioned in the former verse. These are distinguished from the former. They are said to bear witness in earth. They are distinctly mentioned; *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*: and these are said to *agree in one*. Of the Three who bear record in heaven, it was said, *and these three are one*: that is, in Essence, and also in the unity and oneness in the testimony which they bore. Of these three witnesses on earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, it is said, *and these three agree in one*. To avoid as much as possible, going over the same ground we have before, I would only make this one general remark, and then give the division of the text, hoping to fill it up agreeable with the same: and may it be exactly with the Truth, and acceptable to such spiritual minds, as may be here present attending thereon. The one general remark is this—Whilst it hath been said, and still is, by such as are enemies to the doctrine of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity, that the former verse is an interpolation, yet it is easy to observe, that without it, these words of our text must be found without any connection. It is impossible to find any for them, but in the former. I will therefore here unite them; that you for yourselves may see the truth of this. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* Thus you have the clear connection and harmony of them: and also that you may understand the propriety of those learned and excellent men, who lay a great emphasis on this—That leaving out the 7th verse, there can be no place for the latter: that is, if left out, there proves a deficiency, and the

words of the present text cannot be supported; because the former are the foundation of them. It is not that the doctrine of the Trinity is dependent on them; yet it is contained in them. The Bible begins with, and it also ends with it: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Gen. i. 1—3. Here is, *God; the Spirit of God; God said.* What, and who are these, but Father, Word, and Spirit. The *Psalmist* testifies to this truth. He says, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Ps. xxxiii. 6. The book of *The Revelation* closes the canon of scripture: And what is the sum and substance of that Book? Is it not a revelation from the Father, made and given by Him to his Son Jesus Christ as the One glorious Mediator between Him, and his church? And are not each of the Epistles to *the seven churches* spoken by Christ? And are they not all sealed and confirmed by the Holy Ghost? Is He who says at the close of each and every one of them, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* Let this be but attended unto and it will be found, as the whole Bible contains the doctrine of the Trinity, that it also begins with it, and ends with it: so that it neither stands or falls by these words, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one;* any more than on these words, *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one:* yet both of these bear record and testimony to this important truth—That the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father, nor is the Holy Ghost either the Father, or the Son; but they are Personally and Essentially distinct, as to their Subsistences in the Godhead: yet but one and the same incomprehensible Jehovah, they being One in the same infinite and incomprehensible Essence. I will give the division of my text, so as to set before you what is contained in it, thus:

1. I will aim to express these three distinct witnesses, who are said to bear witness in earth. *There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.*

2. I will set before you, who these witnesses are, and in what way they are so, and unite in giving in their witness for Christ. By *the spirit*, I understand the everlasting gospel. By *water* I understand the ordinance of Baptism. By *blood* I understand the cup of wine, or the cup of the Lord, in the ordinance of his Supper. The reasons why I understand the subject thus, will be given, as also how these may be said to be witnesses, of the same important truths contained and expressed in the former words, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.* And

Lastly, I will shew how these three witnesses in earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, agree and unite in one and the same most important testimony; *and these three agree in one.* It is not said of these, as it was of the Three former Witnesses, *these three are one:* but it is only said of these, that *these three agree in one.* May the Lord guide

and by his own inspiration into the knowledge, glory, reality, and grace of the subject: so as that believers in Jesus, may find a real feast in the same. The Lord pardon all my imperfections in going through it, and lead you who are his, into communion with Himself. Grant this, O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, to the honour and glory of thine own free and sovereign grace. Even so, Amen.

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## SERMON LXXX.

---

*And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.—*

I JOHN V. 8.

IN the former verse we had the Three in heaven, *Father, Word, and Holy Ghost* bearing their testimony that Christ is the Son of God—That He is the true Messiah—That eternal life is in Him: and He is this to all who are enabled to believe on Him. In this verse, we have three more witnesses who bear their joint testimony to this same, invariable, essential, and important truth: even the same mentioned in the former verse. These are distinguished from the former. They are said to bear witness in earth. They are distinctly mentioned; *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*: and these are said to *agree in one*. Of the Three who bear record in heaven, it was said, *and these three are one*: that is, in Essence, and also in the unity and oneness in the testimony which they bore. Of these three witnesses on earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, it is said, *and these three agree in one*. To avoid as much as possible, going over the same ground we have before, I would only make this one general remark, and then give the division of the text, hoping to fill it up agreeable with the same: and may it be exactly with the Truth, and acceptable to such spiritual minds, as may be here present attending thereon. The one general remark is this—Whilst it hath been said, and still is, by such as are enemies to the doctrine of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity, that the former verse is an interpolation, yet it is easy to observe, that without it, these words of our text must be found without any connection. It is impossible to find any for them, but in the former. I will therefore here unite them; that you for yourselves may see the truth of this. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* Thus you have the clear connection and harmony of them: and also that you may understand the propriety of those learned and excellent men, who lay a great emphasis on this—That leaving out the 7th verse, there can be no place for the latter: that is, if left out, there proves a deficiency, and the



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me through these particulars, and enable me to give you a clear and scriptural account of the same. Amen. I am

1. To express and set before you, these three distinct witnesses, who are said to bear witness in earth. They are thus in the words before us expressed; *There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.*

That these witnesses differ from the former is easily understood: yet their number is the same; so is their testimony. The place these are in, to bear their witness is on earth. It was said of the Three former, *There are three that bear record in heaven*: yet most assuredly we must understand this of their bearing witness from heaven; otherwise, how could it be known by us on earth. In the record of the Three in heaven and from heaven, and the witness borne by these three on earth, mentioned under the terms of *spirit, water, blood*, we have the same truths testified of. The former Witnesses were, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*: these here are, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*. These being said to be on earth, gives us a blessed item, that the Eternal Three have not left us destitute of this proof of their everlasting love, and the good pleasure of their will towards us. What could be more expressive of the same: that whilst on earth, and so long as we who are Christ's remain hereon, we have not only the record of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, set before us, in their testimony that Christ is the Son of God; that there is eternal life in Him; that it is for us who believe on Him; but that also here upon earth, the Divine coequal, coessential, and coeternal Three, have instituted three witnesses *in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, to testify the forementioned truths unto us. These each, and according to their order, witness the former truths: this must be to our spiritual minds: the former record suits our faith; the latter in some measure suits our spiritual senses. We cannot see the former, but we may the latter. The voice of the former, and Christ in our nature, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on Him, as also his descent on the apostles on the day of *Pentecost* might be, and were heard and seen: but we shall never hear the Father's voice, except in the word; nor see Christ in this our present state, except by faith; nor behold the Holy Ghost, He being wholly invisible; nor will He ever descend on us, as He did on Christ, and his apostles, in an outward visible symbol, as that of a dove on the one, and in the appearance of fiery tongues on the other: yet through His light and inspiration, He is pleased to give us the true knowledge of Christ, and the Father's love to us in Him, as is suited to our present state of grace, and is all-sufficient to enable us to walk before the Lord unto all well-pleasing. The witness which He gives us, of Himself; of his great salvation; and of our interest in Him and it; this is from Himself alone. I conceive our text, with the former, affords us full testimony, that the Three Witnesses who have borne their testimony from Heaven, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*, and the three witnesses on earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, testify to our own personal salvation: if so, we are most truly blessed, safe and secure; for the whole number of Witnesses to this, are six. And they are immutable and invariable in their testimony. Of the former, their unity and agreement are thus expressed, *and these three are one*. Of these witnesses on earth, who bear testimony with the former Three, it is most expressly said, *and these three agree in one*. It will

now be proper for me to proceed to my next particular, in the which more of this most important subject will come before us, to be still more particularly opened and discussed. I will therefore, as the Lord may be pleased to assist me,

2. Set before you, who these witnesses, spoken of in the text, are. And also in what way they are witnesses. As also how they unite in giving in their testimony and witness for Christ. I for myself, and according to the present light I have on this subject, understand these witnesses, here mentioned by the apostle, as on earth to be, the gospel, baptism, and the cup of wine on the Table of the Lord, which is styled by the apostle *Paul, the cup of the Lord*: so that according to this, by *the spirit*, I understand *the gospel*: by *the water*, the ordinance of *water baptism*: by *blood*, the cup of wine in the administration of *the Lord's Supper*. As I shall give my reasons for thus treating the subject, so you are at free and full liberty to exercise your own thoughts on the same. I will also give you the reasons why these may be said, to be witnesses of the same important Truths, contained and expressed in the former words, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*. Then follows, *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*.

The subject before us, is most glorious and truly sublime. If I have repeated some parts of it too frequently, before I have properly entered on the same, you must forgive me. It is most likely to be owing to my most earnest desire, that no part of it should be lost, and that all connected in the same, might be retained: this is my apology for it. The witnesses in my text, expressed under the terms of *spirit, water, and blood*: What are we to understand by these? I reply, the everlasting *gospel* is one of these: the *water* which is another of these, is the ordinance of *baptism*: the *blood* which is the third of these, is *the cup of wine at the Lord's Supper*. If it be so, In what way and manner do these bear witness, and how may these be said to be witnesses? We would you should answer such questions, and declare unto us upon these subjects things which are right! Speak out therefore agreeable unto all this. My beloved, I most certainly will, so far as I am able. Now the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, may well be styled *witnesses*, as they are each of them, most sacred and solemn memorials to all the great and important acts of the Three Divine Persons in the Essence, both as they respect Christ, and his church in Him, from everlasting. And they are *witnesses* in the following way—They give full and undeniable evidence of the everlasting love of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, towards an elect remnant of *Adam's* posterity—Of their council and covenant respecting their salvation—Of the incarnation of Christ—Of the testimony which the Holy Three bore of and concerning Christ, at his baptism, and transfiguration: as also of his complete salvation. This witness is borne in the ordinances mentioned: that is, in the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper: they being designed by the Holy Trinity to this very end, and to answer this great design. Now as I have expressed myself so freely, as to say, that by these *witnesses on earth*, spoken of in my text, as bearing joint witness and testimony with the witnesses spoken of in the former words, are to be understood, the Gospel, water Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord; and have already

made myself responsible to give you my reasons for the same: yet I do not want to conceal this from you—that all Divines do not look on these *witnesses* thus. No; not even the great and renowned *Dr. Goodwin* doth. By *the spirit*, he understands the Holy Ghost within us: by *water*, he understands the work of sanctification, as inherent in our minds by the operation of the Holy Ghost in our souls: and by the *blood*, the blood of Christ, to which we look for our complete deliverance from all sin in the sight of the Lord, and before Him. But give me leave to ask; In all this, is there not a looking within, and at ourselves, and receiving a testimony to ourselves, that we are so and so. If it be acknowledged it is even so; then this, and all interpretation of these witnesses, in a similar sort, must fall to the ground: because the apostle is speaking of these witnesses, as without us: and as being witnesses unto us. So that it can only be in a way of believing, we can receive their witness and testimony: therefore whilst the work of God within us, is very greatly strengthened in our receiving into our minds what these testify, yet our receiving the same is an act of faith, as truly as our receiving the record of *Father, Word, and Holy Ghost*, spoken of in the former words, is.

It becomes me now, to open and express how these witnesses, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, may be understood to be the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper; and what is testified by them and in them, and how correspondent with the record which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are said to bear in the former words. I would again repeat it: by the three witnesses on earth, I understand, the Gospel; Baptism; the Supper of the Lord. Now these are to be opened: as also my reasons given for my thus viewing these as the witnesses spoken of: then I will aim to shew how the terms by which the three witnesses spoken of in the words of my text, suit these; which terms are, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*. By which, and I wish again to express it, I understand *the Gospel; the ordinance of Baptism; and the cup of wine on the Lord's Table*. I will now open and explain what is contained in these, which can answer to that which hath been suggested concerning them, as being the three witnesses on earth, of which the apostle is here speaking. Let me by way of premise say, by *the gospel*, I do not mean it as preached by me, or any one beside: I mean it as delivered by the Lord God himself. And take it thus, it contains a full, clear revelation of all contained in the everlasting love of the Holy Trinity; to the Person of Christ, as Christ; together with all their eternal acts in Christ, and vast designs in Him, upon Him, and with Him, respecting the whole election of grace. It opens the subject, Salvation by grace: which was to be accomplished by Christ, on the behalf, and for the redemption of all the chosen ones. Hence it is that there is so complete a statement of the union, relation, and interest, the Lord Jesus Christ, as God-Man, as their Head and Saviour stood in unto them. As also of His call to His office; of His consecration; anointing; and of His being sealed thereunto by the Eternal Father, and the Holy Ghost. In this same gospel, the glories of Christ shine forth; the whole Salvation of Christ is declared: and it contains the full testimony of God concerning his Son. It contains a full testimony of Christ concerning Himself: and the Holy Ghost who is the Spirit of prophecy; and the Spirit of prophecy being the testimony of Jesus, it must therefore of necessity, contain in it, His testimony for Christ. The apostle en-

titles the whole gospel, "The testimony of God." 1 Cor. ii. 1. This then is one of the witnesses for Christ—Of His Person, and concerning His Salvation: the which the Father and the Spirit have both confirmed, and sealed. *There are three that bear witness in earth. The spirit: why the gospel is so called, shall afterwards be declared: this is the first of these witnesses. And the water: by which the ordinance of Baptism is to be understood; which is a solemn memorial of the overwhelming sorrows of our Lord—Of his Death—Of his Burial—Of his Resurrection. It is also administered in the Name of the Three Persons in the one incomprehensible Essence. Before the person is implunged in the water, the person who is about to dip him, says, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus the Three in heaven are confessed, acknowledged, and worshipped. And like as at the baptism of Christ, the Father bore his testimony of Him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17; and unto him saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark i. 11: so the ordinance of water Baptism is a witness of this. And as Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4: so in Baptism, there is a solemn evidence given that Christ is risen from the dead. To be brief, all the great and fundamental articles of faith, all the momentous truths which concern Christ, as declared in the gospel, are here set before us, and realized in this ordinance unto us. So that it is a witness for Christ; and this upon earth. The person going down into the water, his being buried in the water, his emerging out of the water, is a very expressive figure of Christ, in his sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection. This ordinance as appointed by Christ, as administered in the acknowledgment and confession of each of the Persons in the infinite and incomprehensible Essence, as having made known themselves to us, by the everlasting gospel, is one of the witnesses on earth, which bear witness to the same truth the Three in Heaven do: which is, that Christ is the Son of God—That He hath finished Salvation-work: and that *Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* This then is the second witness upon earth. The third is the cup of wine on the Lord's Table. This, together with the whole contained, and commanded by the Lord himself, in that most holy and sacred institution, is a very significant memorial of the obedience of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross. If Christ had not been incarnate, He could not have obeyed and suffered. If He had not taken hold of our nature, and been Personally united unto it, He could not have obeyed the law for us, nor died in our room. He could not have substituted Himself, and by the transfer of our sins to Him, and He bearing them in his own body on the tree, and sustaining the whole curse due unto them, have removed the whole from us. Now the cup of wine on the Lord's Table, which is called the "cup of the Lord," as the bread is also called the "bread of the Lord," 1 Cor. xi. 27, is a solemn memorial and evidence, that Christ hath finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Now all this being recorded at the Table of the Lord, I look on this as one of these witnesses; and the third of them. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.**

I will now aim to shew you, how the terms, *the spirit, and the*

*water, and the blood*, suit these as witnesses. The term *spirit* I consider as most truly applicable to the gospel itself: our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John vi. 63. And what was it which he spake? Was it not the gospel! And is it not most assuredly true of it—That the same is spirit, and life! And what is this which the apostle says, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2, but giving the gospel, the title of *the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus*? If this be granted, then the propriety of looking on the gospel, under the term *spirit*, is very easily manifested. So with the term *water*: what more easily to be considered in this, than one term for all, of *water* Baptism. The apostle *Paul* says, *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* It is affirmed by a *Scotch* divine, that the washing of regeneration here mentioned, was understood to mean *Baptism*, until *John Calvin* gave it another interpretation. The term *blood*: how most exactly is this suited, to the cup of wine in the Lord's Supper; seeing our Lord himself was pleased to say of it, "this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. xxvi. 28. "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." Mark xiv. 24. "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke xxii. 20. "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." 1 Cor. xi. 25. And this is the third witness on earth: and expressed under the term *blood*. Thus I think I have given you a clear account why these three witnesses on earth, spoken of in my text, are termed, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*. Next follow my reasons, why I conceive these are the three witnesses designed. One reason, and I conceive it to be an all-sufficient one, is this—The Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are all outward witnesses: and the witness which these bear is one and the same, with that which the former Three, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*, are said in the former verse to do. For the Gospel, Baptism, and the Supper, all testify and are witnesses to the same truth—That Christ is the Son of God—That there is eternal life in Him—That He is, and will be eternal life to all his members—That He hath finished Salvation-work—That He is in Himself Salvation. He hath saved all his people in Himself, with an everlasting Salvation. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Now this is one reason, why I look on these as witnesses, and that these are they, who are here mentioned, under these terms, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*. Another reason is this: these are outward witnesses. They are like the Three who bear record in heaven; without us. They bear witness, not for us, but unto us. And their witness accords, and it is for the substance of it, the very same, with the record of the Witnesses in, or from heaven. Let us join both verses again together, and then see if it be not so: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the*

*Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* I will proceed to my last particular, which is this;

3. To shew how these three witnesses *in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, agree and unite in one*, and the same most important testimony—That Christ is the Son of God, and that there is eternal life in Him—That He hath finished salvation-work: and that we are to look to Him alone, for all the blessings thereof: *and these three agree in one.* It is not said as it was of the former Three, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one:* it is said of the three witnesses in earth, *and these three agree in one:* that is, in one and the same testimony and witness, to those important verities which have been spoken of.

These three witnesses in earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, are always one, and the same, in that which they witness of. It would be for our benefit to be disposed by the influences of the Holy Ghost, to be receiving the same continually into our mind: as it would be the means of Christ being exalted in us, and crowned in our hearts, and of his having the preeminency in us, and of his being to us, our All. The gospel is immutable, and everlasting: all its truths and doctrines, are as true as God is true: they are as unchangeable as the Divine Nature: there cannot, there will not be any shadow of a change in them: no; not in time, nor throughout eternity: they contain the record of all the acts of the Divine mind, respecting Christ and his church. The title, *the everlasting Gospel*, is a sufficient evidence, that there is all contained in the same which fully qualifies it, to be looked upon as one of the witnesses spoken of in the text; for where shall we go for the full record and testimony of the Eternal Three, respecting the Sonship, the Godhead, the Messiahship, the Salvation of this most glorious Lord Jesus Christ, but to it? So with respect to the ordinance of water Baptism; most assuredly the whole of Christ, as revealed, and testified in the everlasting gospel, is in this memorial of Him, most expressly set forth, and brought to remembrance. How or what, therefore, can we look upon it, but as one of the witnesses of Christ upon earth: realizing what is set before us, concerning his Person, Sonship, Messiahship, and Saviourship, as it is revealed unto us in the everlasting gospel: and this is an outward testifier and witness for Jesus. As is also the cup of wine on the Lord's Table: it is a most solemn and striking evidence, and in its place a real witness, that Christ hath finished the work the Father gave Him to do—that his Salvation-work is ended—That He is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God: and that he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Baptism, and the Supper, as the Lord's ordinances, will remain unshaken and immovable until the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; at which the dead in Christ shall rise first. Therefore, both these ordinances, together with the gospel, being as the Lord's appointments, unchangeable; and as they, each of them, give in their testimony and witness for Christ, and that in conjunction and conformity with the same record, with that which the Three, in or from heaven bear; so I will conclude with their bearing, and agreeing in one and the same testimony, of that which they are witnesses of. This is

declared in the words before us. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one: which agreement is in the one and the same witness to the Truth, they bear their testimony unto. These unite in witnessing to all revealed and testified of the Father's love—Of the Person and Salvation of the Son of God. And thus the apostle closes this one great part of his subject: for what follows in the next four verses, is the fruits and effects that follow, on this six-fold testimony, given by the Three Witnesses from heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and the three witnesses in earth—the spirit, and the water, and the blood; to the whole sum-total of all the Truth contained in the everlasting gospel. So here I leave this subject. If the Lord is pleased to reflect any light on your minds by the same, the whole glory must redound unto His own glorious Name. If you find weakness and infirmity in this feeble essay to state and set great, glorious, and most important Truth before you, cover the same with the mantle of love: and rest not in any truth delivered, but search into it for yourselves. Truth is so precious, you can neither overrate it, nor can you be too diligent in your enquiries into it. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.*

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## SERMON LXXXI.

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*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.—*

I JOHN v. 9.

If the witness of men of truth and integrity, is a sufficient proof in matters of consequence, and to a question of the greatest importance, then most assuredly the witness of God is greater. It must, it cannot but be so; because He is greater than men: for God is Truth Essentially. He is that God that cannot lie. “A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Deut. xxxii. 4. Therefore the record, the witness, the testimony of all the before-mentioned *Witnesses, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost—and the spirit, and the water, and the blood*, who unite in bearing testimony, as Witnesses, that *Christ is the Son of God*, is all-sufficient proof of the same, and is to be received by us. Thus the apostle reasons and argues on the subject: and none will presume to deny the propriety thereof. For surely, if in human affairs, we yield unto the uniform and well-agreeing testimony of divers witnesses, much more ought we to receive and believe *God's witness*; in which the whole Trinity concur: this is the outline of that which our apostle is here speaking.

In my setting the whole of the text before you, I will cast it into the following particulars, hoping thereby, we may obtain the true knowledge of all contained therein.



1. If the witness of men, is to be received, surely the witness of God much more; it being greater, and higher, and far beyond in importance, that of any human testimony whatsoever. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.*

2. What this witness of God is, which is here spoken of, and whom it concerns, this is to be declared: it cannot but refer back to these words of the 5th verse, *The Son of God*: upon the which it follows, *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* Then follows: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* And these unite in one and the same invariable testimony, that Christ is the Son of God, and the true Messiah. So that the witness of God spoken of in my text, is of Him, and concerns Him. It is expressly said in the words which are before us to be explained, *for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

3. This Truth, and witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son, is to be received by us, without the least doubt, or wavering, as to the certainty and reality of it: for *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

May the Lord the Spirit most graciously be pleased, to enable me to fill up each and every one of these particulars, so as that the same may be advantageous unto you, and myself also: then there will be good reason, for him that soweth, and those that reap, to rejoice together. I am in entering on the subjects before me,

1. To set this before you—That, if the witness of men, such as are had in honour and respectability, for judgment, truth, and integrity, is to be received, when they bear their witness and testimony to a matter of fact; surely the testimony of God, and his own witness is much more to be received: it being greater, and far higher, God himself bearing record of the same; and of more importance than any human testimony possibly can be. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.* This is to be brought forward, as it falls in with this present subject. As it respects the witness of God, that it is far beyond the witness of men, and that it is of far higher importance than any human testimony possibly can be, this so fully carries its own conviction and evidence with it, as to carry all before it. Therefore I shall make no comparison of it, or say any more concerning the same: it being wholly, and as I conceive, altogether unnecessary. Nor does the apostle mention it, but by way of introduction to what he was about to deliver, concerning the witness of God, and his record and testimony concerning his Son. So that I would here lay before you, some most important and solemn declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ, which may guide us into the present subject, and give weight, and add emphasis unto it. The lustre of which, as they may be reflected on our minds by the Holy Spirit, will add dignity to the same.

Our most blessed Lord, it should ever be remembered by us, as *God manifest in the flesh*: as *Immanuel, God with us*: our blessed Lord in conversing with the Jews, in his incarnate state, says to them, “It is also

written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." John viii. 17, 18. Here is full proof, that according to God's law, the witness of two men was valid in a court of judicature: then how much more so, was the testimony of Christ, and the Father which sent Him; that He was *the true Messiah*: for that is the subject which Christ brings as the proof of the truth of his Messiahship. It is true, that our Lord says in another place, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." The meaning of which must be, that if the Scriptures did not testify of Him, He could have no claims to Messiahship. He therefore adds, "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." To which he adds, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth." John v. 31—33. And what did *John the Baptist* say of Him? This which follows.—"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it," or He, "abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John. i. 32—34. Again, our Lord saith of himself, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." John viii. 18. Again, at a time when the Jews took up stones to stone our Lord, for what they called blasphemy: "For a good work we stone thee not;" said they, "but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If ye called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" see John x. 33—36. In the very same chapter, at the 30th verse, our Lord says, "I and my Father are one." And he says in the 15th chapter of this same gospel, at the 26th verse, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." From all these quoted passages, we have our Lord's witness of himself, and also included in the same, the Father's testimony of Him is expressed, together with the witness of the Holy Ghost also: the sum of which, gathered into one general focus is this—That Christ is the only begotten Son of God—The true and only Messiah—The One only Mediator—The alone Saviour: and this is the witness of God, concerning this. If then, the testimony of two men of honesty and integrity is to be received, and ought to be credited, when they bear witness to truth, and nothing but truth; how much more is the witness of God, to be received and embraced, as containing the essence and perfection of all Truth in it: for it is far beyond the highest evidence which can be given by men. So that here comes in the apostle's inference; which is this. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater*: which witness is of the utmost importance; it being worthy of God himself: it is beyond all men, and all their truth put together: it is eternal, immutable, and everlasting Truth: it concerns the Person of Christ: who, and what He is, which God in all his Persons, bears testimony of, and witness unto: or rather, had borne witness of. An account of which is set before us, and given unto us, in the former verses,

preceding our present verse; the substance of which is set before us, and that with the greatest solemnity, thus, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* This brings me,

2. To shew what this witness of God is, which is here spoken of, and the Person whom it concerns. It naturally refers us back to the 5th and 6th verses of this present chapter: in the which we read, *The Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* That you may see for yourselves the truth of this, I will recite the scriptures which follow, and issue in our text: it being here, a matter of great moment, to have the clear connection; so as not to disjoint it; and in order that we may not lose the true meaning of the whole. The words which follow the 6th verse, are, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* Here the subject, including a part of the 5th and 6th verses, ends: then it is our text is pronounced, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

I will now ask you, beloved, the following questions. Does not the witness of God, here referred unto, concern the Person of Christ? Are we not led back for this, to the former verses? Is not what is contained in them, the whole sum-total of that, which God hath testified of his Son? And where does this begin in this chapter? Is it not with the account and proof, which our apostle had before given, of his own evidence, of that which he was an eye-witness of, of the Messiahship of Christ, from the water and blood, which flowed from his pierced side, as He hung stark dead on the cross? If these questions proposed, are properly attended unto, and it be clear from the true and close examination of the same, that it is even so, as it hath been stated, that the connection of our text, reaches so far back, as to the account the apostle gives of Christ's coming by water and blood: then it follows invincibly, that the Witnesses spoken of, must comprehend, the Three in heaven, and the three in earth: and that what they each bear witness of, is this—That Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah—That in Him there is eternal life—That this is by the gift of the Father—That it belongs to all the objects and subjects of everlasting love. The whole of this eternal life, is out of themselves: it is in their Eternal Head, and everlasting Saviour, their glorious Lord Jesus Christ. There cannot be found, more glorious and important truths than these, in the whole Bible. It is true they are scattered throughout it: but here they are gathered into one grand *focus*. So as that their whole strength is here before us expressed; that we receiving them, in this brief summary into our minds, the glory and efficacy of them, may most divinely operate upon our hearts; and that, we hereby may worship God, in the full belief of the same, to his endless praise and glory. Now this is the present subject before us—That all the Persons in the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, bear continual record, testimony, and witness, to all, and every truth contained in the scriptures. In an especial manner, and by way of Personal and distinct appearances, they have each of them, borne their witness to the

Person of Christ—Who, and what He is—That He is One of the Persons in the Essence: as such He is *the Son of the living God*: and this is the very foundation of his Messiahship, and mediation. These truths, those who became apostates from the faith of the gospel and went out of the churches of the saints, swarming about hither and thither, as so many antichrists in our apostle's time, kicked at. They all of them, let them be otherwise diversified as they might, hated these truths respecting His Person and Messiahship, with a most perfect hatred. No Persons in Godhead for them. No; they would allow but one. Therefore they denied Christ both as the Son of God, and Messiah also. He was by their impious lips, pronounced an impostor. It was therefore to vindicate the truth respecting the reality of the Person and Messiahship of the eternal and only begotten Son of God, that the apostle is so fully upon this subject here. Which shews the vast importance of the subject; that it is a most important truth, which most surely is to be believed and received by us. It is also to be received by us, as one of those articles of faith which are never to be given up by us. Without the true belief of it we cannot persevere in the right faith of the gospel; neither can we have the true and proper object of worship. It is God in all his Persons, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the only true and proper object of worship: and this is, as revealed and made known in the Person of Christ: who as considered Personally in the Godhead, *is the Son of the living God*. And as revealed to us in the scriptures of Truth, in his relation to us, as also in his Headship and office, He is God-Man. And in his Salvation and Mediatorship, He is the Anointed One: the great, glorious, and all-sufficient Saviour.

But to return to my text, which reads thus; *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son*; and to enquire what this witness of God is, which is here spoken of, and whom it concerns. There hath been a general light cast hereon; yet that the whole proposed under the present head, may be as fully given as I possibly can; it must be replied to the question, that most assuredly it is spoken of Christ, and it wholly concerns Him, and belongs unto Him; and it hath this contained therein—That Christ is one and the same, in the Divine Essence, with the Father and the Spirit—That He is the One true, living, and everlasting God, equal with the Father and the Spirit: He equally possessing the whole fulness of the Godhead with them—That as Personally distinct from the Father, He is *the Son of the living God*. The Father bears this testimony of Him, and the Spirit doth the same, in the holy gospel. And this testimony of Him, is the subject before us: and it concerns Him: every truth of the everlasting gospel, rests and centres upon the truth of this. So that neither it, nor our faith in Him, is of any validity, if this be not the Truth of God: without this, Christ cannot be the object of our worship. No; nor can He be the Rock of our salvation. He cannot be the Lord our Righteousness; neither can He be our Purifier. The word declares, that He being Jesus Christ the Son of God, His blood cleanseth us from all sin. But, deny his Person and Godhead, and his whole work of salvation ceases to have any worth, or efficacy in it: nor can we be saved by it. And if the Person of Christ be denied; if we cease to believe his distinct Personality and true distinction, in the Essential Nature, or Essence-Existing, or Godhead, we

thereby rob Him of his Essential Glory, as One in the incomprehensible Essence, which is Indivisible. We are to believe Him to be what He is ; and this, not because we can comprehend it. No ; for it is to us, and will, even in the state of glory, be wholly incomprehensible : we are called upon to believe that, which God in all his Persons has spoken of and concerning Him ; and declared of Him in the sacred volume of inspiration. I would here ask you, If this be not the truth of the subject ? Even according to that which is here before us ? Are not the words of our text these ? *This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* Beloved, this is a subject for faith : it is not for sense to be exercised upon. And all true faith, in these great and immutable truths, is, and can only be founded, wholly and altogether, upon the testimony, record, revelation, and witness of God Himself, concerning the same. *This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son :* which is setting his own Divine Seal thereto ; and is the greatest truth in all the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity, the oneness and coequality of the Son with the Father and with the Spirit, are those essential, deep, and important truths, which are the foundation of all, and every truth contained in the same.

It is expressly said in the text we have before us : *This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* It would be well with us, if we always, reading the scriptures, kept this clear in our view—That the Person of Christ, and the work and offices of Christ, should not be so blended together, that the one do swallow up the other : yet it is too common with us, to dwell so much on the salvation of Christ, as for us to neglect that true and proper acknowledgment of the Person of Christ, the object of our worship : which acknowledgment is altogether, and absolutely necessary—The water and blood which flowed from the side of Christ, with the testimony of the Spirit to this, (verse 6th), who foretold it and had it recorded by way of prophecy, long before its accomplishment—The Trinity in Unity, have each of them borne their joint, and particular testimony to the Person of Christ, and also to the Messiahship of Christ : when, where, and in what manner have been declared in the Sermon on the 7th verse—The trinity in earth, *the spirit, and the water, and the blood,* these continue the same testimony to the truth of Christ's Person, and Messiahship : this hath been set before you in the former Sermon. These six Witnesses are so united in their testimony, to these most essential truths of the everlasting gospel, that the apostle here says, *for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* I will now present at one view, the whole of this before you, as contained in the following scriptures, leaving them with you, for your own study, without making any comment on them.—*Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood : and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* verses 5—9. Most undoubtedly this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. And surely it is, in truth, greatness, majesty, and reality, beyond all human testimony

whatsoever: and therefore, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* And this is an outward testimony. It is so to the present moment. It lies open in the word of grace. It is the same at all times. It is a constant and immutable witness. And God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Witnesser. *For this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* He not only bore witness of Christ, and unto him, at his baptism, and transfiguration; but He continues his witness to us, of these immutable truths to the present moment: and this being a witness and testification wholly out of us, we are to look for the same in the written word. This brings me,

3. To observe, that this truth and witness of God, which He hath testified of his Son, is to be received by us, without the least doubt or wavering, as to the certainty and reality of the same; for *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

This is a very just inference, and proper conclusion. The truth spoken of, and which is to be received, is as true as God is true. He to whom it refers is the Son of God: Messiah the Prince: the Saviour of an elect world. And it, in an immediate manner, concerns Him. We have our concern in it also: for we cannot believe on the Son of God, but as we receive the testimony of the Divine Father concerning Him, into our minds; and this can be no otherwise, than as we receive it by faith in the word, in the which the same is recorded. Now as the record, the witness, and testimony of God, concerning his Son, is set before us in the word of inspiration, and is true, and cannot be otherwise; so it demands our full belief, and free and hearty reception of the same: and this, without the least doubt or wavering. This cannot, as to the truth and reality of it, leave the least opportunity of being called into question, it being *the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.* And this witness is sealed and confirmed by the Personal, and joint suffrage of each and all the Persons of the Godhead. And our personal and eternal salvation is in the Person of whom the Divine Father bears this testimony and witness. It is here to be observed, the greatest act of faith is a receiving the witness and testimony of God, which he hath testified of his Son. How do we receive this? In a passive way and manner. From whence do we receive it? From the word of inspiration. Who gives us to receive it, and to understand the same? The Holy Ghost. Where do we receive this witness and testimony which God hath testified of his Son? Into our spiritual minds: and there the knowledge of the same exists: there it dwells: from thence it can never be eradicated by all the powers of darkness: this being that truth, that *Christ is the Son of the living God*, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail: so our Lord himself says, Matt. xvi. 18. Faith is wholly founded on the word of revelation: it receives the knowledge of every Divine truth therefrom: it hath no foundation but the bare word of it. *Thus saith the LORD*, is the only warrant for believing: and this is so clearly to be understood from the words of our present text, that we need no other evidence for the truth hereof. For if the receiving this greatest of all truths into our minds—the witness which God hath testified of his Son; is founded alone, upon the truth of what is recorded in the revealed word and will of God, and this is the only witness which God hath given

and testified of the same to us, then it follows, that our receiving the same, from the word, and by the light and influence of the Holy Ghost into our minds, is to set our seal to this truth of God. And it cannot but be, that it must be so in all other truths. We are not the subjects of God's truths; that is wholly impossible: we, as believers, are receivers of them; and in our true receiving them, we set our seals unto each and every one of them; and this agreeable to our receiving the same, and giving full credit to each of them. As it respects that which is more immediately before us, respecting the coequality of Christ with the Father—that our Jesus is his coequal and consubstantial Son, equal in all the essential blessedness and perfections of Godhead with the Father, and the Holy Ghost; this is to be received by us, into our minds, from the word, as so essential to our being, and well-being, as believers, as that without it, we are neither believers, nor christians. It is even so, if God's Truth is to be acknowledged to be Truth. We believe that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and the true Messiah, and Saviour, merely and alone, because God hath revealed and declared the same in the Holy Scriptures. And that is the only true faith in these subjects which is received, and founded thereon. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* May the Lord the Spirit, be most graciously pleased to give you scriptural light and knowledge, into those most solemn truths which have been set before you. And may you most cheerfully and freely receive the witness of God, concerning his Son, into your minds; so as that this Truth may live in you, and abide with you: and that He may ever dwell in you, and you in Him. May it be even thus with all the holy brethren, to the glory of Father, Son, and Spirit, to whom be praise for ever. Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXXXII.

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*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.—1 JOHN v. 10.*

WHEN the Truth of God is received into the mind, it carries its own evidence with it unto the heart: there is no contention about it; nor can Truth be called into question by such as receive it: so far from it, they have in themselves the most full and clear demonstration thereof. Christ the Son of God is the immediate object of faith. The witness of God concerning this, in the scriptures of Truth, is our warrant for believing the same. Such therefore as believe this, have within themselves, the witness of this truth. Such as resist this truth, under the clear evidence of what is given in the Scriptures concerning the same, make Him a liar.

*He that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* In my speaking on these words, I will endeavour to cast what is contained in them into the following division.

1. That *the Son of God*, is the object of faith. That he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness, and evidence of the truth which he believes concerning *the Son of God*, and what the Father testifies of Him, in himself.

2. What is this *witness in himself*, which the believer hath, which is here spoken of. Let this be enquired into, and if this be properly opened, we shall then get over the main subject which is before us in our present text.

3. That the not receiving the testimony of God concerning his Son, maketh him a liar. *He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

4. This is done, *because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* In going through these particulars, may the Lord so guide, enlighten, and bless me, as that you may receive real benefit, and soul satisfaction. The Lord grant it, to the praise and glory of his most holy Name: even so, Lord Jesus Christ, thou ever blessed Son of God. Amen. I am

1. To set before you, that *the Son of God*, is the object of faith: that he who believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness and evidence of the truth which he believes, concerning the Son of God, as also of what the Father here testifies of Him, in himself.

The Person of Christ is the foundation of the church of God. The Person of Christ, is the full and uttermost glory of it. The work of Christ is the salvation of it. The righteousness of Christ is the perfection of it. The blood of Christ, is the everlasting purity of it. And the Person of Christ is the object of faith. Hence our Lord said, *He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* And he put this question to the man who was born blind, whose eyes he had opened, *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?* Yet it is not Christ, as the Son of God, as the object of faith, which the apostle is here treating of. He is here expressing what the believer on the Son of God, is the subject of. He is, as enlightened by the Spirit of God, into the true knowledge of the Person of Christ, from the word, and by the Spirit, and from these, having received the witness and testimony of God, concerning his coequal and coessential Son into the mind—by this very means it is, the substance of what is recorded of Him, and testified of Him by the Father, is received into the mind, and the same is recorded in the heart. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* The former verse will cast light on this. I will therefore here recite it. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* The believing on the Son of God, which is here spoken of, is receiving the Father's record, witness, and testimony concerning his Son. This can only be received from the Scriptures: and alone from the authority of



God himself. And the Truth of God, in his witness concerning his Son, being received into the mind, it is this is the means of all the believer's knowledge of and faith in this. He hath the true knowledge and faith thereof in his renewed mind: and it is this maintains this great truth in his soul. It might here be observed, that all believers are well acquainted with the Godhead of Christ. And whilst it is not the case of all of them, to have a clear scriptural apprehension of the Sonship of Christ, as Personally distinct from the Father, in the Essential Essence, as the Son of his Nature, the Son of his love; yet they are all, who are believers in Truth, believers in his eternal power and Godhead. And none of them are without clear, scriptural evidence of this, from the Scriptures, of the truth hereof. What Christ is, and also what Christ hath done, in Salvation-work, as also what the Father hath testified of his Son, in the written word, and of Him as the glorious Mediator, and of Himself as everlastingly well pleased in Him—all this is so received by the believer, into his mind, as that he hath the truth and witness of all, within him. Thus, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*. Believing, and evidence of the truth of what is believed, go together: there cannot be one without the other: hence it cannot but be, that, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*. Believing on the Son of God, is too little understood: almost all who speak of believing, have too much to do, when they express themselves on the subject of believing, in making the whole terminate on what such and such are the subjects of; diverting the mind from the true object and subject, on the which faith is to be exercised: and the estimate of the whole, with many, consists wholly, in believing their interest in Christ. This is not the doctrine of the words before us; neither is this the doctrine of the Scriptures. Whatsoever we believe aright, concerning the Father's everlasting love, and the Person, and Salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is wholly without us: it is wholly revealed in the word. It is by spiritual perception, we have the true apprehensions of the same. And the ground of our faith, the objects, and subjects of our faith, and all we are called upon to believe concerning them, is wholly and altogether without us. It is in our believing, these are all realized in, and within us, by the grace and testimony of the Holy Ghost. The whole that we know of Christ, and believe concerning Christ, with the foundation of all our faith in Him, and expectation from Him, with the witness of God concerning Him, arises from nothing in ourselves. It wholly springs from the word of revelation. It is also maintained thereby. Believing on Christ; believing in Christ; these very expressions are so many confirmations of this. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for life everlasting, is quite a different subject from believing our personal interest in Him. Our believing in Him for righteousness and strength, this is quite a different act of the mind, from that of believing our being one with Christ. Our Lord sets this subject in a very clear light, when He speaking to *Saul of Tarsus*, says,—“I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” Acts xxvi. 17, 18. I will now proceed to the next particular; to enquire

2. What this *witness* here spoken of is, which the believer *on the*

*Son of God hath*, which is here the subject of the apostle's declaration. We will enquire into this; hoping to give a clear account of the same; which if properly opened and explained, we shall then be led over, the main subject, and greatest difficulty which is before us in our present text. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* It is these words, which are now most particularly to be opened, and explained.

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hath this witness in himself—That Christ is what the Father in the Scriptures declared Him to be, One equal with the Father and the Spirit, by Essential Union with the Godhead, and that He is, *the Son of the Father, in truth and love.* And the witness of God, which He hath testified of his Son, is received into the believer's mind, and he hath the witness in himself of the truth and reality of the same; he hath no doubt nor hesitation concerning it. The record of God concerning it, is to the believer, all-sufficient: the witness of God to this truth, carries all before it: he receives the same from the word of inspiration. It is the Holy Ghost who maintains the truth thus received, in the mind: by this means it is, that the believer hath the inward witness of this truth always in his heart. It is not that he is always living in the act and exercise of his spiritual mind thereon; yet this truth always abides within him: he never fails to have this inscribed on his heart—That *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is true and very God.* That *He is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* And this witness, which the believer hath of it in himself, arises wholly from without himself: it springs from, and it is altogether founded on the word of revelation. Whilst all, in and throughout the whole creation, and every act and dispensation of Providence, carries marks, proofs, and evidences of our Lord's eternal power and Godhead, so that all who deny the Deity of Christ, who are favoured with the Bible, are left without excuse; yet it is from the word itself, through the teachings of the Holy Ghost, the man in Christ, receives this truth of Christ into his mind, and believes it with his whole heart. It is so, as it regards all contained in the words before us: there is an outward witness and testimony of all spoken of in the words before us; and it is through the knowledge of the same, that we have the inward witness and evidence thereof within us. To prove this, I will here recite the whole of my present text. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* Now the witness and record which God gave of his Son, was an outward one; it was by a voice from heaven: it is past: and so it is expressed in the words before us. It will never be renewed and repeated any more; yet it is fully recorded in the word, and it is set before us therein. We receive the knowledge of the same therefrom. We believe it upon the authority of God himself. We act faith thereupon. It is altogether, with the knowledge we have of all this, from the written word, and agreeable with the same. According to this, all we rightly believe, and rightly receive into our minds, of the Person, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and concerning the Father's everlasting love to us in Him, is all recorded in the word of Truth. It is all ratified, confirmed, and sealed with the joint oath and testimony of the Eternal Three. The whole is immutable Truth: as immutable as God Himself. In believing, we receive it into our minds. The

Holy Ghost makes it spirit and life unto us: and hereby it is, we have the witness of the truth of all we believe, in ourselves. Thus, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* It was so in the apostle's time: it is precisely so in ours. *He that believeth on the Son of God,* hath in his own mind, an evidence, and witness of the Truth, both objectively and also subjectively, of the reality of all in his own mind, of that which he believes from the scriptures of Truth, and the Spirit of Truth, concerning Christ, and also of what the Father testifies concerning Him, in them.

As I would aim to bring down this vast subject, so as the weakest mind of any saint, might easily comprehend it, and receive profit thereby, I will set before you, what that very real, and personal, and particular witness is, which as true believers on *the Son of God*, they have within themselves. And this I will do, if God permit, without going over the subject which hath been already delivered; and also without the least contradiction to the same. Yet I must make use of the first part of my text, that it may be seen whereabouts I am. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* Now every one born of God, unto whom Christ hath been revealed, and who in consequence of this is a believer on *the Son of God*, hath this witness in himself—That he is in every sense, what he is described in the word of God to be, a fallen creature—That he is a sinner—That he hath all sin in his fallen nature. He is, as one in *Adam*, by the fall, entirely corrupted: so that in his fallen nature dwelleth no good thing. This the scriptures declare him to be. He receives the truth of this in his mind. He feels the influence of this in his own soul. He subscribes to the truth of all this: so that he sees himself to be the subject of all contained in sin. This he hath the witness of in himself. He hath also this witness in himself, and within him, that by the works of the law, he cannot be justified—That he cannot contribute one mite, towards saving himself from the damnation of hell: nor can he appear before the bar of the Holy Lord God, as he is in himself, and of himself, but he must everlastingly perish. Now the truth of all this hath been received into the mind from the word. The Spirit of God hath put forth His power with it in the heart: and there it remains and abides; so that the believer never forgets what he is as a sinner. He hath the witness of this within him. He hath this witness in himself. He hath also in his own soul, an apprehension of Salvation by grace, through the Person, righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. He receives into his mind from the scriptures of Truth, the revealed account of it. This is by the inspiration of the Spirit of God: this remains within him. He believes that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin: that his righteousness delivereth from death: that it is to and upon all them that believe; and he hath the witness respecting the truth of all this within himself. He receives his knowledge of all this, from the revelation made of the same in the everlasting gospel. The Holy Ghost shining thereon, hath imparted to the mind, a spiritual perception of these realities, and made them all this to the believing mind; hereby it is quickened to receive and believe the same. And from hence it is, these truths have their existence in the mind; so that he that believeth on *the Son of God*, hath Christ in him, and this witness in himself, of the all-perfection of the Person, blood and righteousness of Christ and rests wholly in the same for everlasting Salvation, and eternal life. So also

the believer on *the Son of God*, having received into his mind, from the word of inspiration, what is declared therein, concerning the everlasting love of the Father, to all whom he sees in the Beloved; this hath its residency in the mind, and the believer hath the witness of it in himself: so that it may be clear, even to the babe in Christ, that *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*—of what he is in himself—of what Christ is to him—of what Christ hath done for him; and—how completely he is saved in Him, with an everlasting Salvation; as also of the whole of it, as proceeding from grace—from the good pleasure of God's will, which hath been most gloriously displayed in acts of everlasting kindness towards the elect sons of men. I hope I have made this great and most important subject very clear and plain unto you: and this, I also hope, will be found to be scriptural, so as it may be depended on. I will now sum up the substance of what I have delivered unto you; which, if I understand my own words and the meaning of the same, amounts to this—That all who believe on *the Son of God*, have within them the evidence, of their being fallen creatures. That they are saved from sin, the world, satan, death, and damnation, by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. That they have the whole of Christ, and the Father's everlasting love, with the operation of the Holy Ghost, within and upon the election of grace, fully recorded, testified, witnessed, and set before them, or that we have the same fully set before us, in the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. I say, If I understand my own words made use of, in setting forth the subject unto you, this hath been the substance of it: and so far as this hath been clearly expressed, and so far as it contains God's Truth, so far may the Lord be pleased very particularly to bless it unto you. I will therefore proceed to my next particular: which is this, and here the next part of our text must come in, and be explained;

3. That the not receiving the testimony of *God* concerning *his Son*, maketh him a liar. *He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

This is a high and a most tremendous charge! None most certainly can exceed it. I cannot but conceive it must have been pronounced with an especial eye to the antichrists, and false prophets, and teachers in that day, in the which the apostle lived. He had before, in his 1st chapter, pronounced him a liar, who said, *he had not sinned.* v. 10. He said the same of him, who said he knew Christ, and kept not his commandments. ch. ii. 4: in the same chapter, he proposes this question, and gives an answer to it himself; “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” v. 22, 23: and here he says, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* It was a most shocking opposition to the testimony and record of God concerning his Son, to withstand it; to resist it; to renounce it; this was, so far as the antichrists of that age could do, making God a liar. I think this must be understood to be a part of the sin against the Holy Ghost: the unpardonable sin. The withstanding the testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the ministry of the apostles, concerning the Person of Christ, his Sonship, his Messiahship, and Godhead, was to deny the voice of the Divine

Majesty in the Person of the Father, who pronounced at the Baptism and Transfiguration, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* Whilst I do think, as expressed, that with respect to this charge, *he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son,* it is to be considered as designed for the apostates from the Truth, in the last hour of the apostolic age; yet it must be considered as designed for the church of Christ also. It might be to prevent an apostacy: and also by way of caution. I shall therefore make use of these words, so as that by the blessing of the Spirit of God, the same may be of benefit to us. The testimony of God concerning his Son, must be worthy of our most free and ready reception. To be doubtful of the same, is to act unworthy of God. And in the testimony of God concerning his Son, all the truths and doctrines of grace, are included and comprehended. It should therefore be very particularly considered, that every divine truth of revelation, should be received by us, from the authority of God's revelation thereof, and His testimony and record in the Scriptures concerning the same. Truth is Truth: it is God's Truth. We should not be shy to receive it, and as such to give the fullest confidence unto it. Therefore, not to receive the Truth as it is in Jesus; not to receive the whole Truth, as fully revealed unto us in Jesus; not to receive Him into our minds, as being the whole Truth of God, as having in his Person, and Salvation, all and every truth realized in Him and accomplished by Him; is to withdraw our full testimony, to that which the Divine Father hath testified in the written word concerning his Son. And the not receiving the testimony, or record that God gave, and hath given of his Son, in the Scriptures of his Son, on whom must this fall in our times? Let this be attended for a moment unto; for I do not intend the whole of this Sermon should be expended on them; yet it must unavoidably fall, on all, let them be who they may, who are *Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Deists, and Antitrinitarians, Universalists, and Free-thinkers,* be they classed in whatsoever denomination. I grant that the truths of the gospel should be properly stated; and each and every truth respecting Christ, his Person, his mission, and the testimony of God concerning Him, as recorded in the gospel, should be so clearly stated in that which we style, and is properly styled, the ministry of the gospel, as to leave all, let them be who and what they may, in their own reason and thoughts, without excuse for their false and presumptuous thoughts, and rejections of the testimony which God himself gives and bears in the revealed word, of and concerning the Person, and Mediatorship of the Lord Jesus.

I cannot but conceive, it hath been a great sin, into which the religions in this Nation have fallen, and they still continue in it—They are so desirous that sinners should be saved, that they absolutely give up the very truths of the Gospel for this. I am indeed an old man, and full of days, being now, at this present, the age of seventy-two and almost three quarters, and shall be fully that, if I reach *Wednesday* in next week, which will be *Lady-Day*, 1819. Yet as *Job* says, and the Lord be praised, I can say the same, *Is wisdom driven quite from me?* I mean, have I yet lost a sight of Truth, or of what Truth is? The Lord be praised I have not. And whilst the Salvation of Christ is, and will be everlastingly precious to my soul; yet I know there are things of far greater importance than all this amounts unto, contained in the word.

What respects the revelation of the Person of Christ, who, and what He is, what He is in the eye of the Divine Father, what His love is to Christ, what His thoughts are of Him, what His testimony, record, and witness of Him are in the sacred word, is of far greater importance, than that which in the same subject concerns us. And if the Gospel was properly preached, and the Person, and mission of the Son of God, as revealed, with the Father's testimony of Him, fully, scripturally stated; erroneous men, and professors would be confounded. Nothing can be contrary to Truth, but it is a lie. Whoever vilifies the gospel is a liar; even every one who thinks little of Christ, and speaks lightly and slightly of Him, is a liar. To avoid being the same, it becomes us to receive, fully, and freely into our minds, the testimony and record, which God hath given in the scriptures of his Son: seeing, he that believeth not God in them, and receiveth not his witness and record in them concerning the Person, and Messiahship, and Headship of Christ, and that there is eternal life in Him, *maketh God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* It is not actual, but by consequence, such *make God a liar.* It is by treating the whole subject, as not worthy the least notice, or credit. This brings me to my next particular; which is this:

4. And this making God a liar, is done, in rejection of his Truth, and in not giving proper attention, and full credence unto the same. The whole stress is, in our text, laid here: such an one, *maketh God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* It is not any new revelation of Christ, or any fresh witness, testimony, and record, God is to give of his Son. No; the whole is spoken of in the past tense: unless that which may be said to respect us; as that we either believe, or not believe. We either receive, or we do not receive the testimony and record, which God hath given of his Son. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* We have only this part of these words to dwell upon—*The not believing the record that God gave of his Son.*

How many are there, who amid all their profession of Christ, overlook, and have not the least idea of, being concerned to know, any thing of God's witness and record concerning Christ! Very few of those who have a concern about their souls, have any knowledge of these important truths of the gospel, or are led into true and right apprehensions of the same. It is a most blessed thing, to have the eyes of the mind so enlightened, as to perceive the deep things of God: and most assuredly what concerns the Person of Christ, and the Father's testimony and record concerning Him, must be accounted amongst the deep things of God. And it is because we are not so off our own self-dependence, and because we are not so enlightened into the knowledge of Christ, as to be built wholly on Him, and to be fully rooted and grounded in Him, that we know so little of that which is contained in such truths as these. The generality of those who talk of faith, have what they talk of, founded upon some work, or quality, which they are the subjects of. It is inherently in themselves. They will in their way, ascribe the same to the Holy Spirit. Yet they are ready to confess, they would not build their confidence for Salvation in Christ alone, without this. So that the full amount of it is, they place the whole confidence of their minds, on what

grace has made them in themselves; and Christ is brought in afterwards: whereas He should be placed first. Now as such want not to, neither do they depend upon Christ alone for Salvation, irrespective of any thing in themselves, so the witness, and testimony of God concerning his Son, does not strike their minds, as that which is of the greatest importance. They rather look on the same as historical; as that which belonged to the apostles, and it might also to believers in their times. Those whom I am now speaking of, conceive inherent grace or what they consider in them such, and external conformity to Christ, are the best of all evidences of personal interest in the love of the Father, and in the Salvation of the Son; and that this is all which the Holy Spirit witnesses unto—That they being so and so wrought upon, they are thereby evidenced to be the children of God. Most unquestionably all the children of God are in regeneration made the subjects of inherent grace; but our text is most certainly upon quite another subject. We need say no more than hath been already said, to prove this: all that remains to be added, is only this—he is a liar, and he maketh God a liar, for this plain and self-evident reason, *because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son*: which record received and embraced is very expressive of a believer: it is a declaration and description of such an one as is right with God. He is one who believeth on the Son of God, who hath received into his mind, God's witness, which he hath testified of his Son. He hath the witness of the truth of all this, with all connected with it in his own mind: it is the foundation of all his hope in God; and this is his daily life of faith, and the acts and exercises of the same. Christ is his object and subject. The testimony and record of the Father, concerning his Son, and eternal life and salvation; this as recorded in the gospel, is that which strengthens the believer's mind; it feeds, strengthens, and nourishes it. And it is truly blessed with him, when he is constantly receiving the record of God, concerning his Son, and living in the free and full belief of the same. It is very becoming all who profess the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of the living God, to be receiving the Father's record concerning his Son, because the not receiving it, is to make God a liar, in this most important matter. *He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* It is God's record that God gave of his Son, which is to be received into the mind. The receiving this is an act of faith: and it is received into the believing mind. This is to honour God—To put a stop to unbelief—To receive the uttermost satisfaction respecting the Person and Salvation of the Son of God. All which, shews that faith hath to do with God; with his Son Jesus Christ; with the Father's revelation of Him; with his testimony concerning Him; with the record and grant of grace, by the which it appears, that *God is love*—That *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The subjects which have been expressed, I now leave for your particular spiritual consideration. May the Lord the Spirit shine upon the same. I will close with the words of the text: *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* May the Lord save us from staggering at any revealed truth, through unbelief. May we give glory to God, by believing His record which he hath given of his Son, in the gospel. Amen.

## S E R M O N LXXXIII.

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*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—1 JOHN v. 11.*

THE truths contained in the past verses, the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th, are altogether most divine, important, and interesting. The apostle having given his account concerning the testimony borne by the Three in heaven, and three in earth, to the Person, Sonship, and Messiahship of Christ, proceeds; and he draws this inference from the same: *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* He then adds, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* The whole of which he fully expresseth in the words of my present text, which is now before us for our consideration. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* As the witness of God, concerning his Son, as it respects His Person, and Office, and Salvation, is immutable Truth, it ought to be received by us as such. The witness of God, and his testimony on these most important subjects, is recorded in the Scriptures, and remains therein contained, for our continual benefit. He that believeth the same, and receives what God hath declared concerning his Son, hath the witness of the same in himself. He that rejects, or neglects giving full credit to the witness which God hath testified by a voice from heaven, and still continues to bear testimony unto, concerning the Person, Godhead, grace, and salvation of Christ, in the sacred and infallible word, such an one maketh God a liar. This is by way of consequence. His not believing that which God hath testified of his Son, is such disrespect and treating it with such indifference as if it was not worthy of the least regard: as also by calling the whole of it into question; and with the uttermost virulency opposing it. We cannot properly and immediately make God a liar. It must be in the way which has been expressed: and this many did, who sinned the sin unto death in the apostle's day. In a sense and degree, it is the essence of unbelief, in all its shapes and forms. Therefore the words quoted, in the past verse, should be made use of by us, as a preventative: it should be looked at, to deter us from our unbelief. I would add, whilst I cannot but look on every act and instance of unbelief, as giving God the lie; yet I do not look on it in that high sense and degree, that I conceive the apostle is here speaking of. For as it stands in these words, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son;* I cannot but look on this, as spoken to, and of the antichrists, and false prophets in that day, who denied both the Godhead of Christ, and his Messiahship also. As it respects the words of my present text, it contains the following particulars.



1. This is an eminent part of *the record*, which God hath given us in the word, as it concerns us; and respects us. I cannot call it the whole of God's record; nor can I express myself on it, as if it was the principal part of the record which God hath given in the Scriptures: because, most assuredly, his record of Christ, his witness which he hath testified of his Son, the record which He hath given in the written word concerning Him, must go before, and far exceed in majesty, glory, excellency and importance, *the record* which is here spoken of: and it is so stated in this chapter. God's record and testimony, and witness for his Son, go first in this chapter. This verse is an expressing his Divine record and good will to us. And this is *the record*: that is, it is this part of it which concerns, and belongs unto us. And it becomes us most heartily to receive the same, and most cordially to embrace it; as we shall most certainly find our account in it: *And this is the record.*

2. I will set before you what is contained in this record. It is this—*That God hath given to us eternal life.*

3. In whom this eternal life is given. It is given to us. The gift is unpeakable. It is life: yea, it is eternal life. But it is not in us. It is in our Eternal Head, Christ. It is given unto us in Him—*And this life is in his Son.* Whilst the subject is vast, and if there be any tolerable light cast upon the subject, it must be enlarged upon, yet I thought it would be best to comprize the whole, under these three heads, and in them set the whole of it before you. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* I am

1. Under one general head, to give an account of *the record of God*, which is spoken of in the words before us, which respects us, and concerns us: it is not the record which God gave of his Son, as recorded in the past verses, which so far exceeds this, and goes above and beyond it, as the Person of Christ, considered either as *the Son of God*, or as God-Man, or considered Mediatorially, everlastingly exceeds ours. It is true, that stands connected with the record here intended in the words before us; which words or record springs out of the other. For as the Messiah—the Son of God, came into the world to be the Saviour of his whole church, made up of the elect of *Adam's* posterity, chosen before the foundation of the world: so the Perfection of his Person and work; his office; together with his union and relation to, and interest in his church here expressed by the word *us*, are included in all this: hence it is the apostle fetches what is before us out of the preceding record. *The record* here spoken of, is attributed to God the Father: this is very evident, He being spoken of very expressly in the past verse; in which we have these words—*The record that God gave of his Son*: then it immediately follows, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* Then this record the apostle is here speaking of, must be distinct from the former: it must originate from and be founded on the former; as the one concerns Christ, and this concerns us.

*The record* spoken of, and which immediately concerns us, must be that free and full, complete and perfect revelation of grace, made in the Holy Scriptures, of the Father's everlasting love, of the Son's complete salvation, of the Holy Spirit's grace, who by taking of these things of the Father's love, and Sons's salvation, and shewing them to us, there may be such submission to the record of God, concerning the reality,

and everlasting virtue, and cleansing, justifying efficacy of the blood and righteousness of Christ, as is all-sufficient to stop all the clamours of sin, guilt, and condemnation: and also of producing that peace in the mind or conscience, as may well be styled the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. The gospel may be considered as a sacred record, or memorial of all the acts of grace, which the Divine Persons in Jehovah were pleased to will from everlasting. And as to *record* with us, is to register a thing, or matter of fact, so as that the memory of it may not be lost, so the gospel is a register, if I may so express myself, that the great acts of the Holy Three may not be lost: but that by the same, the memorial and memory thereof, may be kept up and continually preserved in the thoughts and memories of the people of God. Hence the gospel may be considered, as God's memorial to us, and record of his grace towards us: the whole of which consists, in his revelation of Christ, with his record, witness, and testimony of Him. And in the same revelation we have a record, and memorial of Salvation: which is all of grace. It was contrived by the Father, executed by the Son, and revealed and made known by the Holy Ghost. This as set before us in the Bible, is *the record* spoken of in my text: and it wholly concerns us. Very few have this apprehension of it. None can speak, or declare, the benefit the people of God lose through the want of such an apprehension by them. The gospel as such, contains the Title Deeds, by the which, Christ is given unto us, made over to us, and we are entitled to Him, and Heaven, and glory by them. It is the very *Magna-Charta* of Salvation. This is God's record, in the which every thing is so laid down, in that clear way and manner, as that he who runs may read. And were we but skilful in this word of righteousness, it would appear in what way we are to exercise our minds, and act faith on what is therein set before us. The Person of Christ, as God-Man, in whom we were beloved, and chosen before the foundation of the world—On Him as our Eternal Head, our Lord and Saviour, we are to exercise our faith: and this according to the record, made and given of Him, by the Divine Father in the same. We cannot do this, any further than as we receive the same into our renewed minds; which receiving is under the light and influence of the Holy Ghost. And our walking before the Lord, in the real enjoyment of his love to us, and in the real and actual believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is ours, and that he hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, is influenced, yea, it is what it is, as we understand, and give free and full assent and consent to the gospel, which is this record of grace. This then is the record: in the which the will, counsel, covenant, and oath of the Eternal Three are so freely, and fully expressed, that the spiritual perception of the same, invigorates the renewed mind, and helps on in the way to the enjoyment of eternal life and glory. Now as I have shewn you what this *record* is, which the apostle is speaking of in these words before us, so I go on to shew,

2. What is contained in this record: it is this—*That God hath given to us eternal life.*

It must therefore differ from the former, spoken of in the past verses, which contained God's record, witness, and testimony of his Son, and his Messiahship; which may be considered as the foundation of this. But that, more principally concerned Christ: this, most especially con-

cerns us; and so the very words themselves express. I will quote the two former verses, and join them with this which is now before us, that you may see the same with your own eyes, and for yourselves. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* Then follow the words of the text, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* Now what is before us, is not expressly mentioned in the preceding verses; it is included, yet that but by way of consequence, unless we derive the same from these words of the former verse—*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* And as God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and all the record he bare, and still testifies of his coequal and beloved Son, is not only to glorify Him, but to set Him also, with the whole of His record of Him, and for Him, before us; so Salvation being connected with this, hence the apostle might well say, as he here doth, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* So that this is that which is connected with, and comes out of the before-mentioned *witness and record which God had borne*, to the Person, Messiahship, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope this is made clear and plain unto you; if so, it will greatly help us, not only to a right understanding of the text, but also to such a spiritual apprehension of the same, as will be very greatly beneficial unto us.

It is now to be considered by us, what is contained in this record; which is, an account of what God hath given to us. As all the gifts of God are worthy of himself, and are bestowed upon us, as so many proofs of his love, so this gift, *eternal life*, which may be said to comprehend and exceed them all, is the choice expression of his everlasting love to us, in Christ. He who gave the elect, being and well-being in Christ, before the world began, gave them also eternal life in Him; which is the perfection of being. It consists in the spiritual activity of the mind, on God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Spirit, as also on the revelation He hath given of the same in the word of grace. Our apostle had said in the 2nd chapter of this Epistle, v. 25, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* And here he says, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life:* which implies that He hath made a grant, and gift of this—That it is contained in the record of Truth; consequently it must be set before us therein; by the which we are to receive the knowledge of it into our minds, so as to have real spiritual apprehensions thereof, and hereby enjoy the same in our hearts, and give the Lord the glory and praise of it. In the *record* mentioned in our text, eternal life is contained: and in this *recorded*, that this is a gift. It is on us that this gift is bestowed. The record of God concerning this, is our warrant for believing, and receiving it. As it comes so well authenticated, even from God himself, and is also confirmed by the joint testimony of the Eternal Three, and it is sealed with their joint oath, it demands our utmost confidence, and it becomes us to give full

and implicit credit and confidence to the same. *God hath given to us eternal life.* To view this as the very gospel itself, is most truly quickening and comfortable: it reflects a glory on it; as it also proves the same to be of the greatest importance; and would lead the Lord's people to understand, that the very essence of faith consists in giving credit to God, and trusting simply in the revelation of his grace, which He hath been pleased to set before us, concerning Christ, with that which He hath done for us, and with what He hath bestowed upon us in Him, and what He hath made Him to be unto us, He having given us being in Him by eternal election: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

To have a clear judgment of the truths and doctrines of the grace of God, as they most assuredly contain the things which concern our everlasting peace, is an inestimable blessing. This cannot be, without a right apprehension of what is contained in God's record, both as it concerns Christ, and us. Therefore it becomes us to seek to be spiritually and soundly acquainted with the same; as it contains the whole ground and warrant for our faith in Christ Jesus. Yea, it contains Him, and eternal life also. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life.* What can exceed eternal life? This is the gift of God. It is already bestowed; and it is upon *us* this gift is bestowed. But this will be taken up, and treated upon, more particularly under our next head of discourse. This is the record of God, the sum and substance of inspiration truth—That God hath given to *us* eternal life. So that this being made over, by a free grant of grace in the everlasting Gospel, we enter upon our right and possession of it, in a way of believing the same, and thereby have the real enjoyment of it, in our manner and measure. In the gospel we have everlasting life. We have now as full interest in it, and title to it, as we shall have when we have the full enjoyment of the same in eternal glory. Our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 47. We have in Him, an everlasting righteousness, which is to, and upon all them that believe: and we are made by an act of God's free grace, *the righteousness of God in him.* We have in the Person of Christ, and by virtue of his righteousness imputed unto us, justification unto life. We have in Christ redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of the Father's grace. We are in Christ, freed from the imputation of all sin: *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* In Him we are saved with an everlasting salvation. In Him we are complete. In his Person we are accepted. In Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. In Him we have a title to Heaven and Glory. In Him we have righteousness and strength. All which is revealed to us in the gospel: and everlasting life is contained in all this. Therefore it might well be comprehended by our apostle, in this record which he is here speaking of. He might well say of the whole, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* In this record it is declared, what is contained in the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus: on the footing of which, we have hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. The record of God, in and concerning the same, is as im-

mutable as the nature of God : it is confirmed by the oath of God, and his counsel : it is impossible for God to lie. It was thus confirmed, that *the heirs of promise might have a strong consolation*: even that we might, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*. As we receive the gospel into our minds, as thus made known by the record and witness of God concerning his Son, and salvation by Him, we centre in the Threè in Godhead for all the blessings and benefits thereof: our faith is firm in the same, and our lives and conversations are spiritual in proportion, to our true knowledge of it, our free and hearty reception of it, and our maintaining faith in this record of grace, *That God hath given to us eternal life*. I will now proceed to my next particular; which is this :

3. To shew in whom this eternal life is given, as also unto whom this eternal life is given. It is a gift : it is given to us. The gift is unspeakable : it is life ; yea, it is eternal life. But though it is given to us ; yet it is not in us : we have it not independently ; for it is wholly out of ourselves in another, for us. It is by communication, and by virtue of union and communion with another, that *we* have the blessed fruits and effects of the same. It is in our Eternal Head, *Christ*, who is both God and Man. It is given unto us *in Him—And this life is in his Son*. We will now recite the whole of our text, that by looking afresh at it, we may see that all these particulars are contained in the same ; *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*.

This *eternal life* spoken of in the words before us, of the which a record hath been made by God himself, in the Sacred Scriptures ; to which he hath testified and borne witness, is altogether a free grace gift. It flows down from the fountain of his great love, wherewith he hath loved us. This eternal life is given. It is in Christ it is bestowed. It must consist in the gift of his Person : this being the richest gift the Father could bestow upon us. So it is, we, almost in all our contemplations of God, and his love to us, are disposed to overlook the greatest gift of God's love to us : which most certainly is the gift of the Person of Christ : for his Person exceeds all other gifts, blessings, and benefits. He was given to be our Head : it is from hence our union to Him, relation to Him, and interest in Him commence. Yet in a very unaccountable way, so it comes to pass, that very few, if any of the professing people of God, will have any thing to do with the eternal acts, will, and design of God in Christ, as it respects the ancient settlements of grace, between the coequal and coeternal Persons in the Unity of the One incomprehensible Essence. The love therefore expressed in the gift of Christ's Person, in the primitive design of God, that He should be the Eternal Head of his body the church, and that eternal life should be bestowed on them in Him, is very little known, and attended unto by saints, as saints. No ; all their minds are confined to Christ as a Saviour, and to his work of salvation. It ought not to be so ; for what is the foundation of all the love of Christ to his people, and from whence is the spring and fountain of it ? Is it not all founded on his relation unto them ? If so, then this should be regarded by us : and it would by no means diminish, but it would greatly enhance the love of Christ to us, and which He expressed towards us, in his incarnate state, and by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ is eternal life. He is so called

in the 1st chapter and 2nd verse of this Epistle. “(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)” And Christ, *the life*, and *that eternal life*, there spoken of, was given as God-Man, to be the Eternal Head unto his people, and eternal life was given unto them in Him, before the world began. His Person was bestowed upon them, that He might be their Husband, their Bridegroom from everlasting. He was their everlasting Father, because they were in Him, as his children, his members, his bride, his beloved from eternity. All this was by the Father’s gift of Him to them, and by the Father’s gift of them unto Him. He is, as the Head of his whole church both in earth and heaven, their One Eternal Head; and God hath given them in Him, eternal life. It is in Him, by the Father’s free gift. It is in Him for all his members. It is by His union unto them, and by His communion with them, He so imparts the same unto their minds, as that they are made truly alive to God, through the grace and influence of the Holy Ghost: *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* It is given to us, the elect of God; yet it is not in us, whatsoever we may think of it; for we have it not independently. It is a supernatural gift. It is wholly super-creation grace. It was bestowed on the elect of God. It was bestowed upon them in Christ. They have it in Him, by means of their eternal union unto his Person: and it is in consequence of His union to their persons, and Personal communion with them, that the same is manifested unto them, and they have the fruits and effects of the same in their own minds, lives, and conversations: *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* It is the gift of the Divine Father. It is his gift which he hath bestowed upon us: even us; who were the objects and subjects of his love from eternity. As his love to us was free; it originated from the sovereign good pleasure of his will; so this gift of eternal life, was the fruit of his everlasting love, and proceeded from his own good will to us in Christ. As he never loved us, nor took any view of us out of Christ, so He never did bestow any blessing upon us, but in Him. It is expressly said, that He, as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, (or, things) in Christ.” Eph. i. 3. And in our text, it is said, *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* It is our blessedness, that it is in Him for us—That it is wholly out of ourselves. We are entirely out of ourselves in Him: it will be so to all eternity; for we, the us here spoken of, never had, nor shall have any true being and existence but what we have in Him, God-Man, either in earth, or heaven. And this is wholly the fruit of God’s everlasting love to us, He having given it to us, and eternal life also. If the Lord is pleased to give us right, scriptural, and spiritual views of the same, it will lead us, with holy astonishment, to cry out at such an unspeakable display of grace, *O the depth!* I can speak but very feebly on this subject, and cast some glorious truths connected with it together, hoping they may be improved by such of you, as may be more enlightened into these great and glorious subjects; which form a part of, and are the record of God, which concerns our salvation, and life everlasting. In the true contemplation on which, we are blessed with the real enjoyment of life everlasting in our own minds. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his*

*Son.* May the Lord pardon my weakness and great deficiencies in opening these truths, which contain the deep things of God, unto you. May the Holy Ghost be pleased, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to descend upon you; and lead you to the right understanding of our Lord's words. He says to his Divine Father, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* The Lord grant this for his holy Name's sake. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXXIV.

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*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*—I JOHN v. 12.

IN these words the apostle comes to a most positive decision, and by it, as I conceive, concludes a subject of the greatest importance—Such an one as contains the whole Bible in miniature: for most assuredly, the Messiahship of Christ, the eternity of His Person, and Sonship, His co-equality with the Father, His being as it respects his Personal distinction from the Father and the Spirit, the Son of the living God; this, with the testimony of the Divine Majesty of the Father, must of necessity be acknowledged by all saints to be, the first and most important truth in the revelation, which the Lord God hath been pleased to make known to us therein. It is very common with me to express myself thus—That the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all contained in the scriptures—That it concerns us, in every part and particular of our salvation—That without a scriptural acquaintance with the same, we are destitute of the very supports necessary to found our faith on. And in whom is the whole of this glorious mystery realized, so as that we might now, and evermore receive the same into our spiritual minds, to our present and eternal comfort, but in the Person of Christ, who is both God and Man? In whom, and by whom this great truth concerning the distinction of the Persons in the Essence is declared. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not a Person in the Self-Existing Incomprehensible Essence, as God-Man. He is truly and Personally in the Essence, what the Father and the Spirit are—God Essentially. He is as to his Personal distinction, the Son of the living God. And in grace which we can never fully comprehend, it pleased the Father, Himself, and Spirit, that He should be God-Man. He shines forth thus in Heaven, before his Father, and the Eternal Spirit. He shines forth thus in the sight of elect angels, and elect saints in glory. He shines forth thus in the scriptures of Truth. And it is his being the only begotten Son of God, is the foundation of this glory. No marvel then, that the true knowledge of Him, should be eternal life: which He himself declares it is: “This is,” (says He to the Divine Father) “life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John

xvii. 3. In the past verses, of the which my present text is the close, we have had the testimony of the scriptures in the prophecies, the attestation of our apostle, the record of the Three in Heaven, and the witness of the three in earth, all mentioned, and all uniting in declaring our Lord Jesus Christ to be the true Messiah—the Son of God—the alone Saviour. At the close of which, the apostle added, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* To which he subjoins, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* Thus the whole of the context is fully laid before you. I am the more particularly concerned so to do at this time, because, as I think, these great things are here finished, and the very essence of all the Epistle also: for what follows to the end of this chapter, is but advices to the saints, and encouragements to prayer, to persevering in the faith, with solemn declarations from the apostle, that they, as himself also, knew that they were of God; that the whole world out of Christ were in the arms of the wicked one. He, and those which he includes in the word *we* knew that Christ was come in the flesh: then he closes with these words, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* Thus you have the outline of the remaining part of this chapter.

The words of my text, which are these, *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*, and which stand in close connection with the former, are very conclusive. They are of themselves so decisive, there needs no long comment on them. It would be well with us, if we exercised our minds more upon them, than we commonly do: it being the grand criterion now, and which will for ever be the great distinction, not only between professor and profane, but also between one professor and another. It is awfully striking, how short, and close those real distinctions are, which the scriptures abound with, by the which they most expressly point out the true saints, from all others. It is done here in two very short sentences. *He that hath the Son hath life.* Such an one is in the actual possession of the same: this is solemnly affirmed. *And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:* this is as positively declared as the former: and it is most truly solemn. It is not to say how sincere, or what good desires, no, nor how far the natural efforts of even a religious mind, in the way of natural religion may go, *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* In my present attempt to open, and explain the text, I will set forth before you the following particulars.

1. What we are to understand by the term, *He that hath the Son.* As also what He hath the possession of, or is possessed with, that hath the Son; and how this is manifested. It is here declared by the apostle, and that most positively, *He that hath the Son hath life.* There is no having the one, but the other also, must be the effect which follows upon it, and this as inseparably as light flows from the sun. *He that hath the Son hath life.*

2. What is contained, and implied by the apostle, in these terms—*not having the Son of God.* As also what he saith of such—They have



*not life.* What that life is, which they are destitute of, shall be declared: in so doing, the second part of the text will be opened. May the whole be agreeable with the written word, and under the light and teachings of the Lord the Spirit. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* I am as it respects the subject before us, to begin thus—to shew

1. What we are to understand by the term, *He that hath the Son*: and also what he hath the possession of, or is possessed with, that hath the Son, and how this is manifested: it being here declared, and that most solemnly and positively, by the apostle, *He that hath the Son hath life.* There is no having the Son, but life must follow on it; so that the one is an immutable evidence of the other. I thought it best to arrange all these particulars under one general head; as thereby the whole may at once be presented to view, whilst it is designed by me, to bring them all so distinctly before you, as that none of them may escape your notice; as I look on what is declared here, *He that hath the Son hath life*, to be of the utmost importance.

It must be, that the connection of these words with those which went before them, be attended unto: because much depends on the same, as it respects casting light on these now before us. The past verse was as follows: *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* Our text is, *He that hath the Son hath life.* If we put both these verses together, it is most easy to perceive, that to receive the record of God concerning his Son, and salvation by Him; this is to receive the subject into the mind: which cannot be, but the Son of God and eternal life in Him, must be received also. It therefore most naturally and necessarily follows upon this, that he who hath received the true knowledge of Christ into his mind, from the word, and by the Spirit, *hath the Son*, in the sense and meaning of the apostle. So that it most evidently follows upon this, that *he that hath the Son hath life.* I think none of you who have spiritual minds, but must see the truth and propriety of all this: and I also conceive you cannot for one moment resist the light of the same. As I take this for granted, I will endeavour therefore, to express and declare, what we are to understand by the term, or expression here before us, *He that hath the Son.* I can conceive and think of this no otherwise than as follows—That it is expressive of the knowledge of Christ: by the which I mean, the knowledge of his Person, and of his salvation, agreeable unto the revelation and record of the same, in the word of Truth: the true and spiritual apprehension of which, can only be conveyed to the spiritual mind, from the word, and by the Spirit. It is wholly from the revelation of the same in the gospel, and by the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God, any one hath the true knowledge of Christ, and the gospel. This is most consonant with, and it is also suited to the former words in the 11th verse, and it fully agrees with the genuine experience of believers, so that none of them will deny the same. I cannot know Christ without the word. It is by and with it, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, that I have the spiritual knowledge and apprehension of Christ in my mind: by the which I receive Him into my heart, so as that He may dwell and abide in me for ever. It is by faith He dwelleth in me. And it is by his word, He makes known in and unto my mind, what He is to me; and it is by the same, that He imparts to me that knowledge of his

Person, love, blood and righteousness, and of the present, and everlasting virtue and efficacy of the same, in my mind, as contains in it everlasting life—As gives me inwardly and spiritually, a foretaste of that eternal life, which I am to partake of and enjoy, when I see Him face to face, in the open vision of His Person in glory. And all this, as agreeable with the record given concerning Him in the word of the gospel. So that the term, or expression before us, *He that hath the Son hath life*, must consist in this—That we receiving into our minds, the record which God hath given of Him, and his salvation, in the true, blessed, holy, and everlasting Gospel, in the which is contained, a free gift and grant of grace, by which the whole of Christ, and his great salvation, is made over unto us; in the true knowledge whereof, eternal life is contained—This received into our minds, is life eternal. This is just what the apostle saith, *He that hath the Son hath life*.

I will now proceed to speak of what *he*, who hath the Son, hath the possession of: or, in other words, what he is possessed of. Our text says, *He that hath the Son hath life*. It is *he*, who hath received the true knowledge of Christ, and the record and witness of God, which He hath testified of his Son, from the scriptures, into his mind, whom I am to speak of: and of that which he is possessed of. This is declared by the apostle, and that most positively and expressly in the words before us, to be *life*. *He that hath the Son hath life*. This most assuredly is very expressive, that the true knowledge of Christ is *life*: which is what our Lord himself asserted, when he said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John xvii. 3. And it is also equal with what the apostle uttered in the former verse, when he said, *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*: then follows, *He that hath the Son hath life*. This life consists in being truly and spiritually possessed with the true knowledge of Christ, and of the Father’s everlasting love to us in Him: and also of all the blessings of grace and glory; so as to have the real existence of them in our renewed minds. It is from hence, under these important realities, as they are set home on our minds, by the finger and Spirit of the living God, that we have actual communion with Christ, and with the Father in Him. In the true knowledge of Christ, we are possessed by Him. And the man in Christ, in the true knowledge of Him, hath a most blessed possession of Him. He in the same, enjoys the blessedness of personal communion with Him: and this blessedness he cannot utter. The outward manifestation of all we know of Christ, and which I am now to speak of, is by outward declarations of what we know, of what we believe, of what we see, both in Christ, and his great salvation. He is most supremely high in our esteem. His Person is our glory. His love is our heaven. His finished salvation is our delight. He is our joy and crown. Therefore to praise the Lord, and speak good of his Name, this is the way, whereby we manifest, that we have spiritual and eternal life in us. We cannot know Christ, but we shall be spiritual: for we cannot know Him, before we have received spiritual life from Him. We cannot have received spiritual life from Him, but we shall have the acts and exercises of the same drawn forth by the Eternal Spirit towards Him. So that whilst we have eternal life in Christ, by the grant and gift of the Divine Father, and this life is not in *us*, but in his Son, yet he putting forth,

as our living Head, this life in us, as his quickened members, it is hereby that we are quickened up unto everlasting life. And our cleaving with full purpose of heart unto Him, our renouncing all but Him, and resting wholly and alone on Him, for life and salvation, are the best proof and manifestation we can give, of our knowing Him, of our being in Him, and of our having actual communion with Him. And this is so true and natural an effect of our knowing Him, that it follows upon it, and this as truly and inseparably as light flows from the sun. Thus, *He that hath the Son hath life*. Christ is the fountain of all spiritual, and eternal life. It is in us, only by a communication. There is no life in any of our gifts. No; nor in any of our graces. It is Christ that puts life into them, and draws them forth into act and exercise. The apostle most certainly means in these words, to cast down all but Christ. So it is; we none of us esteem and value the knowledge of Christ sufficiently. We come up too little to this subject; so that we are all of us, little children, and but babes in Christ. The truth is, this subject is altogether supernatural and divine: it cannot be brought into our minds, but by revelation, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And the same Holy Ghost who gives this knowledge, of the Person, and salvation of the Son of God, must keep up the subject in our minds, and our minds unto the same, or we shall sink under it, and drop off from the contemplations thereof: yet the knowledge of Christ, is the first lesson in christianity. Our increasing herein, is the only proof we have, or that we can give to others, of our progress in the same. And it is only in our true increase herein, that we can have real communion with Christ, and increase with the increase of God. *He that hath the Son hath life*. This is positive: it is so pronounced by the apostle. And as that which the whole church were concerned in; therefore this truth is not to be departed from. The knowledge of Christ is not produced in us, by any grace we may act, and exercise; neither is it promoted, increased, or by any means strengthened, thereby: but the knowledge of Christ strengthens inwardly and spiritually the whole work of God within us, and excites and draws forth every grace wrought in our new nature by the Holy Ghost, into act and exercise, at proper times and seasons; *He that hath the Son hath life*, now, this moment, and for evermore. And where it is, and by whomsoever possessed, it will spring up, and issue in life eternal: none can hinder this. Our Lord saith, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 47. And He speaking of his beloved ones, says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life." John x. 27, 28. I pass on to my next particular; which is this;

2. To shew what is implied by the apostle, in these terms—*not having the Son of God*. As also what he saith of such—They have *not life*. What that life is, which they are destitute of, this shall be declared. In so doing, the remainder of the text will be opened. May this be agreeable with the word. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life*. This is as positive an assertion as the former part of the text, and it shews the importance of that which is contained in the declaration. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*.

As to the terms, or expressions, *he that hath not the Son of God*; this most certainly must be explained thus—That not to have the Son of

God, must contain and imply an ignorance of Him: so as that the true knowledge of Him, not shining and reflecting itself on the mind, the person is destitute of that knowledge of Him, in and by the which, everlasting life is conveyed and enjoyed. Not having the Son of God, is here put by way of distinction to the having the same. As you may see for yourselves, by reading the whole verse, which runs thus: *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* Now to whom do these words, this part of the verse which we are now upon, belong? It is most certain, all sinners, be they who, let them be diversified as they may, by outward acts and circumstances, are as such, destitute of the true and saving knowledge of Christ: yet I do not conceive the apostle hath his eye on them thus generally. I conceive he would that his words here, and his meaning also, should be understood to be designed to express the state and case of such as were hearers of the gospel, yet had not the true knowledge of the same. For as his former words were expressive and declarative of such as had life, *He that hath the Son hath life*: so these are expressive and declarative of such as had not life. And as the former were described by *having the Son*—which must be understood of the knowledge of Christ, as these are described by *not having the Son of God*; so this expression can imply nothing but this, that such persons were destitute of spiritual life. Declaring positively, in opposition to the former, *and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* To be destitute of the true knowledge of Christ, is too often the case of such as are under a profession of Him, and his gospel. It may be said of some of them, they are more concerned about inward grace and experience, as they so call it, than they are in any measure and degree, to know and apprehend the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is set forth in the scriptures of Truth: indeed the whole difference the apostle here makes between one and the other, is this; the one knew Christ, the other did not. Nor can I in the least doubt, or call it for one moment into question, but that what he here says upon this, must be right: as also of what he says of one and the other—That the one of these hath life: the other hath not. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* You and I, men and brethren, are brought to the knowledge of Christ, or we are not. You cannot believe in Christ, if you have not the knowledge of Him. You can no farther believe in Him, nor trust in Him than as you have that true knowledge. A speculative, notional knowledge of Him, differs essentially from a supernatural, spiritual, gospel knowledge of Him: enough hath been in this Sermon delivered on this subject, that I need add no more unto it. As a true knowledge of Christ produceth life in the mind of such as are the subjects of the same, so he that hath not the Son of God, hath not this life in him. So says the text. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

I would here briefly enquire what that life is, which these have not. They have no spiritual life: neither have they a supernatural life. No; nor have they, everlasting or eternal life. What life have these then? seeing there are numbers of them, who are devout, religious, blameless ones. Why all the life any of these have, is only old-Adam life improved upon: and that upon a variety of religious principles suited unto it; yet it goes not beyond the bounds of nature: the refinements, elevations and ecstasies of the same. Some persons under the hearing of the true

gospel, are led to make a profession of the truths, doctrines, worship, and ordinances thereof; yet have not with all this, the true knowledge of Christ. This sometimes is very discoverable; inasmuch as self is manifested to be the predominant spirit in them: and their aim and end, even in that which they say and profess concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, is but to exalt themselves. Now the life of all, let their personal and particular profession be what it may, who have not the true knowledge of Christ, is so various, that in some it is all made up of religious acts, a living on their own performances: in some it consists in living to themselves, and aiming to be so devout and circumspect as that thereby they may have no doubt of going to heaven. All these persons must be entirely ignorant of the gospel of the blessed God. I do not want to speak it, merely for the sake of speaking; but it appears to me to be an awful truth, that in the present day, some actually undermine the true gospel, by preaching so much about the people, of what they are, or of what it is conceived they should be. The ignorance and legality of the mind, until created anew in Christ, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is inconceivable. Such is the deception of it, that one of a legal turn will so manage the gospel, and its ordinances, as to become the more legal by them. Few suspect their own legality; yet none of them can hide it: for this reason, because, *he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* All are destitute of the true knowledge of Christ, who have not received the record of God concerning his Son, and the witness which he hath testified of Him, in the everlasting gospel of his grace. There cannot be a living on Christ, by such as have not received Him, and in whose hearts he is not formed, as the One Hope of eternal glory. So that the life such an one has, who has not the knowledge of the Son of God, is only a life, which it may be, is made up in the apprehension of being possessed of such and such inward graces—Of being found in the practice of such and such duties—Of being wholly devoted unto, and swallowed up in acts of devotion, and natural religion. All which acts are natural; they are not supernatural. So that what the apostle pronounces so positively, as the truth concerning him who *hath not the Son of God*, that is, who *hath not the knowledge of the Son of God*, is the truth of the case: *he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

The true knowledge of the Son of God, produces a supernatural life. It is the death of legality and carnal reasonings. It takes off from all dependence and confidence in the flesh. The true knowledge of the Son of God, takes us off our own centre: and we are led to centre in Him: and we are truly glad, that our spiritual being and existence is entirely out of ourselves, in the Lord Jesus Christ: and that our eternal life is in Him, and the whole of our salvation, our heaven and glory. It is the joy and rejoicing of a man in Christ, who hath the true knowledge of the Son of God, that he hath his all in the Lord Christ: who by living and dwelling in him, is pleased to give the believer the enjoyment in his own soul, of the real blessings and benefits contained in this. May the Lord the Spirit, if he please, bless what hath been set before you, so as that you may receive profit from the same. May the words of our text in both its branches, negative and positive, be often in our view, as they are vastly important. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* May it be given us to prove continually to ourselves and others, that we know Christ, and that He is

our eternal life, by living on Him, to his praise and glory. *Paul* says, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. May we do likewise. The Lord grant it for his great Name's sake. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXXV.

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*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*—1 JOHN v. 13.

IN these words which are now before us, we have the apostle expressing his one great end and design in his writing this Epistle: as also to whom it was sent—*unto those that believe on the name of the Son of God*. The other apostles, in their Epistles, observe the method of directing their Epistles at the beginning: here it is quite otherwise. The great subject of this, is also here expressed: and also, what the fruit and effect which it was to produce: so that in the words before us, we have the brief summary of the whole contained in it, expressed and set before us. All which will most clearly appear, if they are opened as they ought to be: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*. To the intent we may have the subject comprehended, and set forth, so far as my ability at present is capable of, I will cast the division of my text into the following form and order: by considering

1. What the apostle saith, as also what is implied, and referred unto in these words, *These things have I written unto you*.

2. To whom this is addressed: it is thus expressed—*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God*: it is to believers in Christ Jesus: it is *unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God*.

3. The end proposed by the apostle, in his writing these things unto them, which was this—That the things written might be realized in them by it: so as that they thereby might receive and enjoy the benefit of the same: *That ye may know that ye have eternal life*.

4. What the knowledge of this, was to produce in them, and that in a way of continuance, and progression: *That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*: that is, that they might go on, in the free and full exercise of their faith, on the Name, Person, Righteousness, Propitiation, Intercession and Advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Father's record of the same, until they should be raised up, to see Christ face to face in his kingdom of glory. There was to be no stop put to the exercise of their renewed minds on these subjects, until they had dropped

their bodies, and were immortalized in their souls, and crowned with glory everlasting. I will here recite my text, that you may at one view see for yourselves, under the division given you of its various parts, a clear, general, and full outline of the same: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* I am, beloved, to set before you,

1. What the apostle saith, as also what is implied, and referred unto in these words, *These things have I written unto you.*

He must mean, most undoubtedly, what is contained in the whole of this Epistle; and imply also, and refer to what went immediately before, in the verses which preceded our text. I will aim to take in both. We must of necessity take in the Epistle: in it he had set before them, the Person of Christ, in his eternity and ancient glories, as God-Man—The true Messiah—The Saviour of his church and people. He was in his Person, as One in the Incomprehensible Essence, *The Word of life—That eternal life, which was with the Father:* and who as *God-Man*, was manifested in the fulness of time, in his open incarnation, and during his incarnate state. The apostles, *Peter, James, and John*, had the fullest manifestation of Him in his Personal Glory, so that they might be witnesses of the same: this sight they had when they were with Him on the holy mount, so as that they “were eye-witnesses of his majesty.” 2 Pet. i. 16. They “beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” John i. 14. Our apostle in the words before us—*These things have I written unto you*, may well be understood, as including, and referring to, all he had before expressed, concerning Christ as the Son of God—Of what he had expressed concerning his Mediation—Of the virtue and efficacy of his most precious bloodshedding, and everlastingly efficacious sacrifice: the whole of which he had expressed for the consolation of all the called people of God, who had fellowship with the Father and the Son—That the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, was their eternal purification from all sin before the Lord—That whilst they have the whole body of sin, in its inherency in their fallen natures, yet *the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin.* The apostle gives these persons to whom he wrote to know, that this Lord Jesus Christ was with his Father, and before Him in His office as Mediator, the Propitiation, the Righteousness, the Intercessor and Advocate of his people—That He was most truly engaged on their behalf. Certainly these subjects as they are the foundation of this Epistle, must of necessity be implied, and referred unto in this expression, *These things have I written unto you:* as also what he had further expressed, concerning the Father’s love manifested in adoption. How in consequence of the same, when Christ should appear, we, as the sons of God, and members of Christ, should be like Him, by seeing Him as He is. He had declared *the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* He had given such an account of the love of God, as to draw the whole into one grand *focus*, and he sets the same forth in the great and glorious manifestation of the same in the Father’s gift of Christ—In his giving Him, and sending Him into our world to be the Saviour, and propitiation for our sins. This is altogether great, glorious, and divine. So that if we take in these subjects, all of which had been expressed by the apostle, it seems that these must be included, and

referred unto by him, when he here says, *These things have I written unto you.* It was *John* himself who wrote these things, yet he modestly conceals his name; just as he does in his gospel: "he that saw it bear record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." ch. xix. 35. And again after our Lord's resurrection, he styles himself, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." ch. xxi. 7. The persons who first received this Epistle, knew from whom it came; and also why he did not prefix his name unto it. They also knew, and received it, as being written under the immediate direction and influence of the Spirit of God. It might be owing to the persecutions of that present time, which might be increased by the antichrists and false teachers at that time, that he concealed his name. We may be assured of this, that it was not that he was ashamed of the truths which he had written. This cannot by any means be admitted of.

We will now take a view of our text, *These things have I written unto you*, as standing in close connection with the foregoing verses, as it may be conceived the words of our text may have reference unto the same. In the Bible which is before me, our text, which is the close of the section, directs me for the commencement of it to the 9th verse of this 5th chapter. I will give you the whole of the same. *For this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* Not in the least, as setting aside the apostle's including and referring to the subject-matter, contained in and throughout the whole of this most truly excellent Epistle; it appears to me, he does in a very particular manner refer unto this context: and more, and most especially unto this part of the same—*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* It is by our receiving, and giving full credit to the record of God, concerning Christ, and salvation, that we receive the same into our minds, and together with it, life everlasting. Hereby it is we know, *that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* It is from hence that it follows, *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:* to the which the apostle adds, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* Whilst according to what I have set before you, I am for including the sum and substance of the whole Epistle, as included and referred unto by him, in these words, *These things have I written unto you:* yet to my present view and apprehension, the apostle hath a more especial reference to the immediate context. The reason with me for thus conceiving is this—Our text being the close of the same. I am for including the sum and substance of the whole Epistle, and the context also, in these words, as that thereby we shall lose nothing: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of*



*God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* There could neither be believing on the name of the Son of God, nor the knowledge of having eternal life in Him, without the record of God; in the which all this was recorded: nor could we have any true knowledge and enjoyment of the same, but by receiving the testimony which God gave of all this to us in the memorial of it in the everlasting gospel: the whole of which serves to encourage faith and hope in the same. I proceed to my next particular;

2. To take notice as set before you, the persons to whom the apostle addresseth all this which is expressed, included, and referred unto in the words before us. He thus speaks; *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* Thus he most particularly distinguishes them from all others: they are openly and fully declared by him, those who had the knowledge of the Son of God: and who had eternal life in their souls. They had it in Christ their Head: it was the gift of sovereign, free favour and everlasting love. These persons had the true knowledge of Christ. They had everlasting life in their souls; as the very blessed fruit and effect of Christ's being in them; and of his having given them, from the scriptures of Truth, and from and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the true knowledge of Himself, and great Salvation. To these the apostle says, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.*

This is then the title which the apostle gives to saints: they are believers on the name of the Son of God. His Person was their rock. His Salvation their glory. His victories over sin, the devil, world, death and the grave, the matter of their joy and praise. They being believers on the Son of God; it was this which drew out the heart of the apostle unto them. It was on this very account, he had set before them the great things of God: such as in an especial manner concerned Christ himself—The Father's love to Him, and to them in Him: as also of this great grace, to the which they were advanced by their knowledge of Christ, even to the dignity of being manifested to be the children of God. They were the sons of God, by their union and relationship to the Person of Christ, God-Man. From this flowed forth this inestimable blessing; they were admitted into *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* All which were blessings wholly super-creational; they were wholly supernatural and divine; which they could not have had the least perception of, nor any communion with the Eternal Three in them, nor the least enjoyment of the same, if they had not been made partakers of a supernatural, spiritual, and heavenly birth. It was with an intent to draw out, and to draw forth their spiritual minds, into fresh exercises of faith towards God the Father, and his beloved Son, that *the record of God* had been set before them, with their state in Christ—what they had in Him—what they were as his members—how they were fully distinguished from all others. This was evidenced by their having spiritual life in their souls; so as that they, in their exercises of faith, and in their personal communion with God, lived a life of faith upon the Son of God, and communion with Him. This was wholly a supernatural act; it proceeded from a supernatural life, which was the fruit of eternal election in Christ; by the which these persons had being and well-being in Christ, before the foundation of the world: out of the Father's everlasting love in Christ, he is pleased to express and make known to the

brethren and sisters of Christ, individually, the same; hence their being brought to believe on the Son of God, is the fruit of this. Their true apprehensions of Christ, and of the record of God concerning his Son, as declared and set before them, are all of grace, as truly as their salvation is. Their believing is an outward discovery of their having received the knowledge of Christ, and his finished work into their minds, and that He dwells in their hearts. Now it is to such, the apostle here addresseth himself: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* This should be attended unto, and it becomes us to take notice of it: for it is not to all who profess Christ, and the gospel; neither is it to all who are professors, nor is it to all who are under any kind of profession of Christ, and of what may be said to concern Him, and his Truth and ordinances the apostle is here speaking. No; it is not. It is to such, and but to such, *as believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Out of these words, I conceive, we cannot but observe, that Christ is the immediate object of our faith; His salvation is the subject of it; His word, the only ground and warrant for our believing the record of God which is the everlasting gospel; contains all this. Therein the substance of all this is registered, and the whole subject revealed, and testified of. And faith hath Christ in the whole, clear, and full manifestation of Him, as set forth in the gospel, and testified of by the Father, and the Spirit, as the sole and entire object and subject for it to be engaged and exercised on. And faith's utmost extension is to the Person of Christ as *the Son of God.* *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* Our apostle towards the close of his gospel says, "But these are written," (that is, all contained in his gospel concerning Christ,) "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31: which is very similar to the words before us: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* To believe that Jesus is the Anointed One: that He is the Christ of God: that He is One in Godhead, Personally distinct from the Father and the Spirit, yet equally and coessentially One with them in the same Essential Nature, or Godhead, is most assuredly that doctrine of the everlasting gospel, which contains the essence of all the truth contained in the same. Look at the words of our text; you will lose nothing by it: it is for the substance thereof, the very same as contained in what hath been quoted from the gospel written by our apostle: if there be any difference it only consists in this, that we have here the title which belongs to believers in Christ: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* I might here say, that the apostle here gives the best definition of believers, which can be given of them. If it be therefore asked, Who are believers? The reply to such a question, would be to put another, and then make a positive reply. The question is this, *Doth thou believe on the Son of God?* It is a scriptural one; it was put by Christ himself, to the man whose eyes He had opened; this you have, John ix. 35. If you answer this affirmatively, you are a believer; for this is what the apostle entitles those whom he here addresses. It is he who believes, it is such as believe in the name of the only begotten Son

of God, who is a believer, who are saints : this is agreeable with what our apostle says in the following words, when speaking of our Lord in his incarnate state, he says of Him, " He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power" (or, as it is in the margin, *the right, or privilege*) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 11—13. If *believing on the Son of God*, is the one grand fundamental act, and principle of christianity, so as that the saints of God, are thus entitled, *you that believe on the name of the Son of God*, then it would be well to attend very closely unto this. It is you who believe on the Son of God for life and salvation, are believers in Christ Jesus, and have, as that which follows upon believing, everlasting life in your souls. It is you who believe in the name of the Son of God, are *saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus*. The apostle addresses these, *you that believe on the name of the Son of God* : which most certainly implies, that Christ is the object and subject on whom their minds and thoughts are exercised ; and that the whole of their spirituality flows from their communion with the Lord Jesus Christ ; who dwells in them by his word and Spirit, and they dwell in Him by the same. It would be well with us, if we were more and better acquainted with the truth of this : as it would lead us, and that from the word itself, to conceive rightly, that all spirituality, holiness, and every grace, flow into our renewed minds, and are realized in us, and by us, and reflected by our lives and conversations on others, as our minds are so particularly exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ, in a way of immediate acts of believing on Him. These are the persons then, who have the knowledge of the Son of God, who have eternal life in Him, their living Head, who are thus addressed in the words of the apostle, as *you that believe on the name of the Son of God*. So much hath been said, in the course of these lectures, on the immediate subject of believing, that for this reason I shall say nothing more here, lest I only repeat what I conceive is more properly ranged in those Sermons where it is to be found, than it would be here. I therefore say, that such, as through the knowledge of Christ, have everlasting life in their souls, are those who are here addressed : of whom the apostle speaking of them individually says, *He that hath the Son hath life*. And addressing these collectively, he says, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life*. I will now proceed to my next particular,

3. To set before you the end proposed by the apostle in what he wrote unto these saints. Which was, that the things might be realized in them thereby, and that they might know they had, and were the partakers of eternal life. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life*.

It is unto you, *that believe on the name of the Son of God*, that the everlasting love of the Father hath been manifested. It is in you, and unto you, the Son of God hath been revealed. It is in you, the Holy Ghost hath displayed his omnipotent power and grace. He hath done this, and He performed this, when it pleased Him to take of the things of Christ, and made discoveries of these to your minds. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to glorify and exalt the Person, love, blood and

righteousness of the Son of God, in the hearts and minds of the regenerate. It is He who sheds abroad his love in the hearts of believers. Now of all such, it may most assuredly be said, these have eternal life. And to give them such confirming testimonies of the same, as the scriptures afford, is at times to do that, in a ministerial way, which is of essential service to them. And this is what the apostle had in view, and it was his end, in writing as he had done in this Epistle—to benefit the saints thereby. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* It is to these, as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, the whole of that which the apostle delivered, in the context to our present verse, belongs. The grand subject of this whole Epistle concerns those who had eternal life in them. To give them scriptural and right views and apprehensions of the same; this he is here labouring for. It is true he had not so immediately expressed himself before; yet he had been aiming to bring it to this point. There is an emphasis laid on this expression in the text—*that believe.* They were not persons newly brought to believe: they were such as had proved the reality of their believing on the name of the Son of God, by their continuance and perseverance in the faith. Therefore they were the very proper persons to receive and digest, what he had been setting before them, in the various parts of, and all throughout this Epistle. As the persons who believed on the Name of the Son of God, had eternal life, so the apostle would they should know this for themselves. He well knew their every spiritual act of faith, was a proof of this—That the actual communion they were admitted to have, and hold with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, was an evidence of the same: yet he knowing of what benefit it would be, if they were confirmed in the truth of this, he therefore says, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* They might have most blessed knowledge, and full evidence of the truth of this, in their own souls, yet the apostle might write thus to shew what his heart was towards them. It may be well looked upon, that this very Epistle, was designed to produce in the minds of real saints, a gospel assurance of what they are in Christ—That their state in Christ is immutable—That it is their blessedness to live in the belief of what they are in Christ—To believe fully and freely that the Father hath accepted them in *the Beloved.* One grand subject of this very Epistle, which is communion with the Persons in God, is best improved in a believing mind—is best encouraged, and maintained, by a real knowledge that such an one hath eternal life in Him. And true spiritual discourses on the subject of personal communion with the Three in Jehovah, agreeable to the revelation they have been pleased to make known of themselves in the Person of Christ, God-Man, to us, are of vast importance to promote our desires after their most gracious presence, in intimate and personal communion with them. So also particular converse on these subjects, believers with believers, is of great spiritual advantage: it often serves to increase the spirituality of our minds. The apostle had a full knowledge of this: he therefore makes use of it, by saying, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* That ye may know that ye have eternal life: and have the clearest and fullest proof of this in your own minds, you possibly

can this side heaven. So that the apostle was no friend to doubts and fears: neither would he by any means nourish suspicions and complaints in the children of the Most High. The greatness and generosity of his mind is not to be overlooked. He wanted all the saints to be as perfectly happy in the Lord as himself. Therefore he keeps no one of the Lord's secrets to himself, but gives as full account of them as he could: and he declares his end in so doing—That they might know they had eternal life in their own souls, and this by the knowledge of the Son of God: it was hereby fully proved, he that hath the Son, hath life; which for the nature of it, is the very same, Christ himself is the fountain and subject of; it is also of the same kind, though not to the same degree, the saints in glory possess. The apostle *Peter* says, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." 1 Epis. v. 10. But I must proceed to my last particular, which is to shew and set before you

4. What the knowledge of their having eternal life in them, was to produce, and that in a way of continuation, and progression. This, as expressed in my text, was that they might go on, believing on the name of the Son of God. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* The true knowledge of Christ, received through the gospel into the mind, produces the fullest assurance thereof, as also of His Salvation, so as to give to such as have the same, full evidence that Christ is their's, and that they are His. As the Holy Ghost gave them the knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of this in believing on the name of the Son of God, so they cannot enjoy the same, but as they are kept alive in their minds to all this: nor is there other than one way whereby this can be, and that is by believing. And there is no new faith in Christ: neither is there any new thing to be believed of Him, than there was, when we first believed on Him. It may be our minds may be opened to behold more of His beauty and glory, yet He is the same He was. So is his Salvation also. So is his love to us—His delight in us—His thoughts concerning us: so also is our interest in Him. If therefore we have believed in Christ, we are to exercise the same faith on Him, towards Him, and concerning Him, over and over again. This is the same the apostle expresseth in the words before us. This he says to such as believed on the name of the Son of God: it is to such as had eternal life; and he aims that they might know for themselves the truth of this. Even to these, he proposes their continuance in the faith: in the exercise of their faith; and that on the name of the Son of God: this would be full proof of their having eternal life. It is here to be observed, the object of faith is invariably one: so faith, as it hath its true object in view, is likewise always one. The apostle wrote to those who believed on the Son of God, and he also writes concerning their continuation and progression in the same faith: this is so clear from the words themselves, as that he who runs may read. I will therefore as a proof of this, set the whole text before you, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* What more clear and proper inference can be drawn from these words, than what follows? It was to those who believed on Christ, the apostle wrote. It was evident

to him, from their believing on the Son of God, they had eternal life in their souls. It was that they might know this, he wrote unto them. It was that they might give continual proof of this, that he would have them constantly persevere in their exercises of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: as hereby, their minds being fixed on the object of their faith, Christ the Son of God, they would have full evidence that in the true knowledge of Him, eternal life consisted. Thus I have endeavoured to set before you, in my very feeble manner, the subject the apostle *John* presents us with, in these words, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* I would add, in the faith the apostle is here speaking of, the whole of our spiritual life, as it respects the acts and graces of it, consists: so that in truth, we have no more spiritual life, than we have faith on the Son of God. He is our life. We apprehend Him in believing: and we receive all our life spiritual and eternal from Him in this time state, through the channel of faith: and we shall enjoy it in glory in Him, and from Him, by spiritual sense and vision. The Lord bless his Truth. Amen.

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## S E R M O N LXXXVI.

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*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:—*1 JOHN v. 14.

As every thing had been delivered by the apostle, which was calculated to fill the minds of those who believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God, with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; so he proceeds to express the confidence believers have, and ought to exercise and express towards our Lord Jesus Christ: and this in a very special way and manner, in their personal accesses and callings upon him. They in the true knowledge of Him, know that He is their present, and everlasting Friend—That he will never leave them; nor turn away his face from them. This persuasion concerning Him, is fixed in their minds; so that they have the fullest confidence in Him. As he cannot love them beyond what he doth, nor give a greater testimony of the same, than he hath already done, by his laying down his life for them; neither can he say to their minds concerning this, more than what he hath done in his holy word, and the exceeding great and precious promises contained in it; they therefore have this confidence in Him, that ask what they will, so it be agreeable to his word, which is their directory in prayer, they have His ear and heart, and he will not deny them the request of their lips: *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* A most encouraging declaration: may the Lord the Spirit be pleased to enable me to open,

and set forth that which is contained in it, to the real profit and advantage of all your minds. This I shall aim at in these following particulars.

1. I will notice and point out the *him* here spoken of. It is Christ: this appears from the former verse, in the which He is mentioned as the Son of God, whom the saints believed on for eternal life. I will also speak of the ground believers have for confidence in Him—How this should be expressed by them, and exercised in their addresses unto Him: *This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

2. The matter of our prayers: what they should consist of. As also what should be our directory: our prayers are to be according to His will. It shall therefore be enquired into, how we may know his will? For says our text, *this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* It must be observed, as we go through this particular, it is *if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* It is not, if we ask any thing according to our own wills. No; it is, *if we ask any thing according to his will.* It is this is a ground of our confidence, and it is from hence we are persuaded that *he heareth us.*

3. The great encouragement we have in the words before us, that we shall be both heard and answered, as it respects our prayers: *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* I conceive in opening these particulars, we shall have the full scope, and sense of the words, so far as it may be expected of me. I will now enter on each of these particulars: to begin with the first of them, in the which I shall aim

1. To notice and point out the *him* here spoken of: who is Christ; even Him, in whom, and on whom the saints believed for eternal life. That this may clearly appear, I must have recourse to the former verse, which reads thus. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* Then follow the words of our present text. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

Nothing can be more self-evident, than that it is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is the Person here spoken of under the terms of *him*, and *he*, in these words which are now before us. As we have been brought by the word, and Spirit to the true knowledge of Him, so we have been led to believe on Him for life and everlasting salvation: this hath made way for us to exercise confidence in Him, which we by no means are ashamed of. As we stand in continual need of Him, so our faith consists in a continual coming unto Him. And this is kept up and maintained in us, by the proofs and evidences we have had, and still have, of his entire friendship, and the continuation of the same to us. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is our object and subject, so in proportion to our knowledge of Him, we increase in our dependence on Him, and we have increasing confidence in Him: nor can we ever have too great confidence, nor trust too much in Him. It is in so doing, we glorify Him: nor can we glorify Him any other way; for all the obedience we can render unto Him, is the obedience of faith. So that it is only in proportion to our confidence in Him, that we can walk before Him in an acceptable manner, in the paths of holy obedience to his re-

vealed and holy will of command, in his precepts and ordinances. As true prayer is one of the greatest ordinances, except it be that of spiritual meditation, so by it we do in an especial manner, pour out, and express before the Lord our confidence in Him. The Divine Nature is the foundation of all worship. The Persons in the Godhead, are each of them the objects of worship: they are so in the Person of Christ, and also as the alone Mediator. It is in Him alone we can approach the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father: and this is through the Spirit. We have this most clearly and fully expressed in these words; "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Eph. ii. 18. As Christ the Mediator, the Son of God, who is co-equal and co-essential with the Father and the Spirit in the Self-Existing incomprehensible Essence, is the Person who is immediately spoken of in my text; and this, He being the immediate object and subject of our faith, on whom we believe for everlasting life; so I will set before you the ground believers have for confidence in Him. That they have confidence in Him, is expressed in these words before us: I am to speak of the reasons they have for the same. Our Lord is the friend of his people. He may well be considered as well suited unto, and fully answering the description which *Solomon* gives of a friend, as one who loveth at all times, and sticketh closer than a brother. Jesus Christ hath loved his people before the world was. He undertook their cause, and engaged before all time, to raise them up above and beyond all the ruins of the fall: to make this good, He became incarnate, and in the fulness of time, He lived for them, He died for them, He was buried for them, He arose from death to life everlasting for them, He entered into heaven, and He saith to them, *because I live, ye shall live also*. This then is a most certain ground for their confidence in Him. He cannot love them, beyond what He doth. He can never give a greater proof and evidence of his love, than that which He hath already given them; for He hath borne their sins, He hath carried their sorrows, He hath washed them in his own most precious blood. He is the Lord their Righteousness. Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot love his people, beyond what He doth. He cannot demonstrate the same beyond that He hath done. He can give his people more clear and full apprehensions of the same; this may be expected in a time state, and also in the state of glory; but as it respects Himself, he can never increase in his love to them: and this the everlasting Gospel, and its ordinances, Baptism and the Supper, rightly understood, are full proofs of.

The promises of our Lord Jesus Christ, which concern and belong to all his members, are warrants and ground for our confidence in Him, and expectations from Him. There is no sin, wound, want, sorrow, case, circumstance, which the children of God, the brethren and sisters of Christ can be in, either in life, or in the very article of death, but are provided for, in the all-sufficient fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor is this kept concealed from them: no, it is all set before them, in the exceeding great and precious promises, which are recorded in the written word: and in them we may see the very heart of Christ towards us, now that he is in his kingdom of glory. When it pleases the Lord the Spirit to give us right apprehensions of the same, and our ears are open and attentive to the voice of Christ in them, it is thereby we so receive them into our minds and hearts, as to receive the real good and benefit con-



tained in them: and were it so, that we were always thus living, we should find we were no losers by the want of Christ's bodily presence with us; because he opens his whole heart unto us, in his word of grace. The promises are suited to all that we are the subjects of. They contain a salve for every sore—A supply for every want—Health and cure for every wound. We are exactly suited to what is contained in them, and they hold forth to us the all-sufficiency of Christ in his infinite fulness of grace and mercy: the whole of which it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to express to his beloved *Paul* in these words, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. The true knowledge of the Person of Christ as *Immanuel, God with us*—of the love wherewith he hath loved us—of the great Salvation which He hath obtained for us—and of his most gracious words, by the which He addresseth us, in his promises of grace, which contain all things necessary for life and godliness; hereby it is, we grow into an holy fellowship with our Lord: we become so acquainted with Him, as to have holy confidence in Him. We all find that suspicion is the bane of friendship: we cannot be guilty of a greater evil than to entertain any suspicion of Christ: as there cannot be the least shadow of excuse for the same, so it is very injurious to our own souls. For so long as this is the case, we cannot hold communion with our Lord: He can with us; but we cannot, so long as this is the case, with Him. Now as the whole gospel when received, cannot but beget true confidence of heart in our Lord Jesus Christ, so the apostle says, we have confidence in Him; and he points out and expresses how we exercise the same, in our approaches unto Him. In the which this is also contained and implied—how this is to be expressed by us, and exercised by us, in our accesses to the Lord Jesus. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. This is most blessed indeed! To have the eye of Christ upon us—The ear of Christ open to us—To have confidence in Him—To have free access to his Throne of grace, and full assurance it is but to ask, and have; what can exceed this? Surely it cannot be exceeded! All this, Christ by his own words, which our apostle with his own ears, heard drop from his sacred lips, gave warrant for: He said, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” John xiv. 13, 14. And here the apostle, as having his Lord's words in remembrance, says, *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. The interest the Lord Jesus Christ hath in us, and the good word which he hath given us in the word of his grace, are so many grounds to encourage us, to come to Him continually; expecting to receive from Him mercy and grace to help us in every time of need. I proceed and go on to my next particular,

2. To speak of the matter of our prayers; what they should consist of: as also what should be our directory. Our prayers are to be according to the Lord's will: *This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. I am to speak concerning the matter of our prayers; what they should consist of.

The matter for prayer, most certainly, cannot but arise from a real, inward sight and sense of what we are: and also from the necessity we feel of applying to the Lord Jesus Christ for succour and relief: His promises afford us matter for prayer; we can want nothing beyond what is

contained in them. Nor can we ask for the fulfilment of them, as suited to our personal cases, wants, and wounds, but the good contained in them will be granted us : *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* The word of God should be our directory in prayer. And it is as an act, the spiritual desire of the mind, which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is expressed, sometimes mentally, sometimes vocally; at other times it is ejaculatory, and at other times in meditations, and in simple free accesses and outgoings after the Lord. If these things are duly considered, it will most clearly appear, that true spiritual prayer, is founded on a real knowledge of Christ, and of our own present feelings, frames, cases, and experiences : all which we are led into the increasing knowledge of, by the inward teachings of the Holy Spirit. So that it is easy to pray, and we should find it so, were it not that we are so ignorant of our wants, and so full of legality and unbelief. Whilst we all of us, it may be, are for running down all forms of prayer, yet there are but few who are saved from very great formality in our prayers; hence it comes to pass that we seldom have real spiritual intercourse with the Lord in prayer. As we consider the word of God for our directory in prayer, we find in the Old Testament, all the prayers contained therein, founded on the doctrine of the revelation of the Divine Essence, in the distinction of the Divine Persons, and agreeable with their covenant offices, and economy of grace, and the faith expressed and exercised in them, is founded thereupon. In the New Testament, all the apostolic prayers, are founded likewise on the same glorious covenant engagements of the Holy Trinity, only expressed suited to the fulfilment of the same, in the Person, incarnation, life, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, coronation, intercession and advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ; who having finished His work, is now in heaven, living after the power of an endless life, as the Representative and Priest of his people. In the prayers recorded in both Testaments, they are very short, but vastly comprehensive : and they are all so founded on the revealed will of God, that those who offered them, could not doubt of being heard, and answered : which was exactly agreeable to these words of grace; “Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.” Isai. lviii. 9. These are most gracious words!—All-sufficient to encourage us to pray in prayer and in the Holy Ghost—To call upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—To present our persons before Him, in the Person, blood and righteousness of his beloved Son. And He says to us, *Here I am*, what is your request? What would ye that I should do unto you? What shall I give you? What shall I at this very time bestow upon you? That which keeps many of us from this holy, free, blessed, and most spiritual intercourse with the Lord in prayer, is our own formality. We look to ourselves and not to the Lord. We think about ourselves, and that which we would wish ourselves to be, and not to what we are in the Person, and work of Christ. We are for dressing ourselves that we may go to court : and oftentimes in so doing, we lose the opportunity of enjoying our Lord’s presence. There is nothing like gospel simplicity—To go to Christ, and God in Him, just as we are. Let the temper, frame, feeling, and corruption of the mind be what, and as it may, we cannot do better than call upon the Name of the Lord, and make use of Christ : He saith, *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith*

the LORD. Jer. xxxi. 20: *I am the LORD that healeth thee.* Exod. xv. 26: *I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* Hos. xiv. 4. This is also expressed in such words as these by our apostle—*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

I would here ask, what is it to make use of Christ? I reply, to believe on Him—To exercise our spiritual minds on Him—To receive Him into our hearts—And to be continually resting on Him alone, and centering in Him: and this is the very essence of prayer. It is real blessedness to have confidence in Christ—To have free access to Him, at all times, as the matter requires—To keep no part of our case, griefs, sins, or corruptions to ourselves: but to express the whole before Him—To cast all our cares and concerns upon Him—To be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to be making known our requests unto God; and in so doing, to mark how the Lord is pleased to deal with us in all this. It becomes us to take notice whether the Lord is with us in prayer—If he comes in upon our minds with his gracious and life-giving presence—If he grants us audience—If his ear be open to the voice of our cry: or—If the whole is so rejected, that we find nothing but bare words in our performance. Whilst the Lord God, cannot break his word, nor alter the thing which is gone out of his mouth; yet He will shew his sovereignty towards us, in the exercise of the good pleasure of his will towards us: so that sometimes He is pleased to grant his saint immediate audience, saying, *Here I am:* and He gives evidence by his spiritual presence with the mind, that his ears are open to hear the petitions of his people. By the which they may be well assured He will grant their requests; because, what they have been requesting is according to his will: *This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* This is most expressly agreeable with what our Lord saith, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” John xvi. 23. Nothing can be more encouraging: it is the very ground of confidence. We should never approach and draw nigh to God in prayer, without having our eye upon this good word, which if He hath caused us to hope in, we should look upon it as a token for good. It becomes us to seek audience with God—To gain the ear of God—To leave all we ask for with Him: yet the Lord will sometimes exercise his sovereignty, by not admitting us to be so free, and importunate with Him, one time as another. I know what it is at times to have audience with God. I esteem this grace beyond expression. I know at times what it hath been, and is, to have the ear of God: this I value at a very high rate: I want no more; for then, leaving what I have been supplicating the Divine Majesty for, I leave the same with Him; nothing doubting but the same will be attended unto by Him, as shall be for my good, and His glory. To sum up this present subject: It is the true knowledge of ourselves, fits us for Christ: and the true knowledge of Christ, fits us to go to Him. And the matter of all our prayers, and that which they consist in, is our acknowledgments of our nothingness—of Christ’s all-sufficiency—In a total renunciation of ourselves, and in trusting in Christ. His Person and finished work, are the foundation of all our faith and confidence in Him. Our expectation of being heard in

our access to Him, is founded on the word of Truth. His most gracious promises contained in the same, are our directory : and that saint prays best, who makes the least account of his prayers ; who, renouncing himself wholly and altogether, looks immediately to Christ, as so to converse with Christ as to be most intimately and spiritually engaged with Him : and this is prayer. It is because it is so, that many of us cannot but confess, we enjoy more of Christ, and real communion with Him, in ejaculatory prayer, and meditation, than we commonly do in some more particular acts of devotion. The one is without form, or order, it being the free outgoings of our hearts towards the Lord ; whilst the other we are more particular about, and think more of : in the former, in the free accesses of our minds in ejaculation and meditation, we have many a time, some blessed communion with our Lord, whilst in our more set prayers we are not always so favoured. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* And this brings me to my last particular :

3. To declare and set before you, the great encouragement, we have in the words before us, that we shall be both heard and answered, as it respects our prayers, offered up by us to our most adorable Lord : *That, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

If it be asked, How are we to know the will of Christ, concerning us, and also what *his will is*, as it concerns our calling on his most holy Name, in prayer, supplication, and praise ? I answer, we may know the will of Christ concerning us, by his providential dealings with us, and the stations and circumstances of life in the which He hath placed us. We may know what his will is, respecting what we should have confidence in Him for, and also what we should ask Him to bestow upon us, from his holy and revealed will, set before us and expressed unto us, in the written word. What we are, in our circumstances in life, we should be perfectly content with : nor should we try by any means, except we have the warrant of the Lord's word, to alter, and get out of the state in which he hath placed us. Our frames and experiences, cannot but be similar to our personal situation in life. It is by it we only can be affected : and our trials, and sorrows will spring up in our minds, and be drawn forth accordingly ; so that we should make use of the same as matter for our own prayers, and pray accordingly. As it respects knowing the will of Christ, regarding what we should have confidence in Him, and pray unto Him for ; this we cannot but know, if we attend to what he hath spoken unto us in the word of Truth : in the which all our wants are set forth, and so fully expressed, that we who are the subjects, whose cases are so clearly and fully expressed, can never utter them so fully, as is already done for us : we have great reason to bless the Lord for this. So also as it respects the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ to supply us, to the very uttermost extent of all our necessities, it is so exactly and completely set forth in the promises : some of which concern this life, as others do the life which is to come ; some of these are spiritual, some of them are temporal ; some of them are eternal : and these are all *in Christ, yea, and Amen.* A true understanding of them, with a spiritual perception of the good contained in them, together with a right apprehension of the same, furnishes with proper matter for prayer, supplication, and praise : and we pray according to Christ's will, when we pray according to these. And we may know that we ask in prayer

those things which are according to his *will*, when we pray for those things which the Lord hath expressed in his exceeding great and precious promises, to be the good pleasure of his will to bestow on his beloved ones. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Our prayers founded on His promises, have the very grace of prayer: and our looking to the Lord for the grace, strength, or what we stand in personal want of, and that because the Lord hath promised the same, this is faith exercised on Christ for his hearing and answering our petitions; and these are our encouragements. The will of Christ is set before us in his promise: it is suited to every state and case, to every misery and sorrow we can be in, or have the feeling of. The promise is as immutable as Christ: it is His expressing what his own heart is to us. And a true view of our own personal cases, and a clear view of the suitability of the promises to the same, are the right view of the subject; which when we see the truth of, we cannot but find every encouragement thereby. We want very great encouragements from the Lord himself, so as that our faith and confidence in Him may be kept up, maintained, and that we may act accordingly: and what is contained in the words before us, is most divinely calculated to answer this end and purpose. We should come before Him in the full assurance of faith, which consists in believing the dignity of his Person, and the everlasting efficacy and perfection of his sacrifice, by the which he hath put away sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The full belief of and reliance upon the truth of this, constitutes the full assurance of faith: so as that we may enter into the Holiest of All by the blood of Jesus: by the shedding of which, the everlasting covenant is most fully confirmed. We then may well have this confidence in our most blessed Jesus, that we are so interested in Him, and He is so interested in us, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. Surely we cannot have any thing beyond the knowledge and belief of this, to encourage us in our expectation of being heard and answered, in our supplications and accesses to the throne of the heavenly grace. May the Lord the Holy Ghost be most graciously pleased to realize in us these truths which have been delivered. May He also be pleased, to bring us into the true experience and practice of the same. I now recommend what hath been delivered to the consideration of my hearers, and readers; and will reserve what may belong to the remainder of this subject, and only resume it in the next Sermon. May the Lord himself bless his Truth to you, and to all his people so far as seemeth good in his sight, and for his glory. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXVII.

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*And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*—1 JOHN v. 15.

THESE words are the continuation of the former, and are not to be separated from them, unless it be for the sake of a farther improvement on the subject. This is of vast importance; yet it is wholly practical: not but this is built upon the doctrine which went before; or it would want a foundation. To have confidence in Christ, can only be from our having the true and scriptural knowledge of Him. This confidence is very particularly expressed in Him, and is so as evidenced in our hope and expectations from Him, in his hearing our prayers. We are very greatly concerned in this; for if we know that he heareth us, we are then fully persuaded our petitions will be accepted, and will be answered by him, so as that we shall have clear and certain evidences thereof. I will now unite the past, and the present text together, that you may see the truth of these general observations. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* In the words which are now before us, and as connected with the former, we have the following particulars.

1. What the effect is, which is wrought in us, upon the knowledge we have of the Lord's hearing us. It is this—we know he hath returned, doth, and will return answers to our prayers: *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

2. I will enquire into, and give an account how we may know the Lord doth hear and answer us. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

3. The assurance which may be inferred from the knowledge we have, that the Lord doth hear us in prayer is this, that, *whatsoever we ask, we shall receive.* *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* And

Lastly, I will attempt to give you the full and clear evidence of all this; *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* May the Lord help me to give a clear definition of the text, of the whole and every part of it, so as that a word of it may not be lost; and that the full explanation of the same may be to your advantage. Therefore be not offended, if the text itself should be often introduced; and that, more than the division of it may seem to require. I am

1. To shew, what that effect is, which is wrought in us, upon the knowledge we have of the Lord's hearing us: it is this—we know he hath returned, doth, and will return answers to our prayers. This is thus ex-

pressed in the words before us—*And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Christ is the Person spoken of under the term *he*. Believers in Him are here spoken of under the term *we*: these are considered as those who pray unto Him. And these, as sure as they obtain His ear, are sure they have his heart; so that whatsoever they ask, they know that they shall receive the request of their lips, the desire of their minds. And they seeing this evidenced by the realization of this, are fully confirmed in this truth, that God is a God hearing, and a God answering prayer. *We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* I believe and am confident you will find this to be a very good outline and sketch of the words before us; and that, as they stand in connection with the former: which, as this hath been before observed, I shall not repeat it here. Christ is the Person whom his people, the *we* in our text, have an immediate access unto. It is He whom they call upon in prayer: not as some conceive, who think there must thereby be an omission of the Father and the Spirit. No; it is not so: but the access of saints, whilst it is to the Father and the Spirit, yet it is always in the Person, and mediation of Christ; and sometimes it is more immediately unto Christ, the Mediator, Saviour, Advocate, and Intercessor. Yet neither the Father or Holy Ghost is excluded. They are included, yet they are not always mentioned. They are not, here. As it is Christ to whom we come, so we having confidence in Him, we present our petitions before Him: this is in obedience to his command—*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Such words as these, pronounced by our Lord, are encouragements unto us to come to Him, and offer up our petitions before, and unto Him. If he is pleased to grant us audience and hearing, it is from Him a token of good unto us. One evidence of his giving us audience with his Majesty, is the importunity he is pleased to fill our minds with, so as that we really pray in the Spirit, and with the understanding also: we are engaged in faith, and in the Holy Ghost: so as that we are carried above, and beyond the elevation of our natural spirits, into a supernatural elevation of mind towards the Lord, agreeable to our supernatural knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ. When we are thus engaged in prayer, we find we are now praying in an acceptable time, and in an acceptable manner: this generally increases our confidence in the Lord, and very particularly in the expectation of the answer to those petitions put up at such a season; which cannot but be esteemed a high season unto us: because the Spirit of grace and supplications is poured out upon us, and the love of the Father is shed abroad, and sensibly felt and enjoyed in our hearts; our Lord saying, as it were, *Ask what I shall give thee.* It is sometimes even thus with the Lord's people, at his Throne, as it respects the substance of what hath been expressed. Prayer consists wholly and altogether in spiritual simplicity: it is a pouring out of the heart before the Lord. It is a free access to Christ. It is speaking unto Him. It is expressing our desires before Him. It is speaking to Him as our best friend. And blessed be his most holy Name, we need not fear of expressing before Him, all our desires, with the whole of our cases, both

temporal and spiritual, as it will remain with him: nor will he ever disclose the same, or turn it against us to our confusion. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

The *if* here, is not put to raise any doubt in our minds concerning the subject before us: it is rather an inference drawn from the former verse, and it amounts to this—That seeing we have confidence, that whatsoever we ask Christ for, agreeable to his will, he will give it us: then we knowing the truth of this, and that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. This seems to me, to be a very genuine interpretation of the passage. And it is also agreeable with what our Lord speaks in these words, which are recorded in the 2nd chapter of the *Song of Solomon*, v. 14: “O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” Our Lord loves to see his people before Him: they are always acceptable unto Him. He loves to hear their voice in prayer and praise. He calls upon them for this. He expresseth his delight herein. *Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* The Lord’s people cannot pray in vain. This is most fully expressed in our text. For *if*, or, inasmuch as, *we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* Prayer is the desire of the spiritual mind. The petitions put up are many and various: they are intensive, they are extensive; yet we know, saith the apostle, whatsoever we ask, we know that we are heard, and answered in. We see and enjoy the answer to our prayers. We know, it is self-evident unto us, that we have the petitions that we desired of Him: this is great encouragement to the Lord’s people to continue in prayer and supplication—To expect to be heard and answered: it should put them upon looking out for answers to their prayers. I have as fully expressed my views of the text, in this general way, as my slender ability will admit. Therefore adding no more to this first head of discourse, I will proceed to the next particular proposed, which was this:

2. To enquire into, and give an account, how we may know the Lord doth hear, and answer us: *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

It being my design to render the present subject as simple as possible, whilst I would shew the same to be vastly interesting to us all, I shall therefore aim to set before you, how absolutely necessary it is, that all discouragements should be removed from our minds, arising from any considerations concerning ourselves. Some of these are as follows. It is sometimes conceived by us, we do not know what it is to pray: we go on in the exercise of what we call prayer; but such is our deadness and formality in it, we are wholly displeased with ourselves for the same; so that we think it would be better if we were to drop it entirely. I believe this is that which, at times, passes in the mind: which, were the whole of it a truth, should only send us to our Lord, with this petition; Lord teach us how to pray, and what to pray for. It may be, a sight and view of our own meanness, and nothingness, may at times be in our apprehension a great bar; yet it is not in our own names, persons, and



worthiness we come before the Lord in prayer. No; it is in the Name, Person, and worthiness of the Son of God, on whom we believe for eternal life. Under the ceremonial law, it was the Lord's command, that *Aaron* the high priest, who was the representative of all the people, should have on his forehead, a plate, or as we so say, a crown of gold, with this inscription on it, HOLINESS TO THE LORD: or, *The Holy One of Jehovah*. The command was, "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." Exod. xxviii. 38. As this was typical of Christ; and He being *the Son of God*, and our great High Priest who is passed into the heavens; and in whom we are accepted, and represented; so we are to have our minds exercised on the dignity of his Person, and his worthiness: which, when we have, it removes all thought of what we are in ourselves, from us. It is in his Person we are accepted. It is in Him, as our Holiness, our Righteousness, our Purifier, the Father beholds us. And these views should be ours, at all times, in our accesses unto the Lord: this would remove all discouragements arising in us, on account of our meanness, and nothingness.

It is a truth, that in us dwelleth nothing that is good—that we have a whole body of corruption inherent in our fallen nature—that sometimes we fall thereby. This we sometimes exercise our thoughts too much on, so as to make use of it to keep us from the exercise of prayer; whereas there is nothing it can suggest to our minds to prevent us therefrom. All the saints have been, and all are alike with us herein: if it breaks out at any time in us, it did, and doth also in them. The apostle *James* tells us, *Elias*, or *Elijah*, that great prophet, was a man subject to like passions as we are; yet this did not prevent his prayers from being heard and answered. And he prayed in prayer, or, "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." chap. v. 17. It is evident from the scriptures, that there is nothing, you, I, or any of the saints are or may be the subjects of, should be any discouragement to us to pray, or lead us to neglect this exercise, or our looking out and watching unto prayer; and making use of every thing which befalls us, and every occasion, and opportunity of pouring out our hearts before our Lord Jesus Christ as the case calls for and requires. I hope I have expressed, by way of removing all discouragements from our minds, that which is sufficient to answer this design, with the light and blessing of the Holy Spirit accompanying the same. I would here observe, prayer, be it mentally, or vocally expressed, is not the more or less prayer, be it long, or short. The apostle *Paul* seems to be a man in Christ, swallowed up in prayer. He prayed for the churches of Christ. He prayed for particular churches. He prayed for saints by name. How are we to understand this? Most assuredly as he expresseth it; but surely as the apostle had daily on him, the care of all the churches, and was employed in travelling, in preaching, in writing, and visiting, at times, particular saints, how could he find time for all this? My friends, I cannot but conceive his prayers were very comprehensive, and very short—That it was at times just like this; Lord, there is such a church, such a

minister, such a saint, whose cases are so and so: be thou graciously pleased to remember them, and be to them as their cases require. *Mr. Romaine* tells of one *Mr. Henry Dorney*, a man who carried on large concerns, and was an eminent believer, in *Gloucestershire*, who was much in prayer; and was always very short; who on all emergencies, when things went wrong, called his family, and friends also, who were with him in his house, to prayer, out of the customary time; yet he was very concise in the same. But I am to enquire into, and give an account, how we may know, the Lord doth hear and answer us. The apostle says in our text, *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

The enquiry proposed is of great importance: if a scriptural answer be returned, it will without all doubt be satisfactory to the mind. It is the Lord the Spirit alone can guide me through the subject: may it please Him so to do. It is the course of the believer, to walk with God in a way of believing: this is kept up by way of holy intercourse on either side; in the which the believer cannot but be exercised in prayer, under which term, I include all outgoings of the spiritual mind towards the Lord. There are seasons, when the mind is led into very great familiarity with Christ: the heart is freely and fully opened unto Him: some special blessings are requested from Him. These are sometimes for ourselves—sometimes for the church in general—sometimes for such saints and persons, as we are more particularly interested in: in all these, we are at times left to our natural affections, and find we have been too much taken up in this. At other seasons, the Spirit of God possessing our minds, and engaging them with great importunity, we are led to converse with our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, in an extraordinary and supernatural way; so as that we are insensibly to ourselves, led to pray for those very things which it is according to the will of God to bestow on us, and others. I do for myself look upon it as a token for good, when it pleaseth the Lord to prepare the heart for prayer; when He indites the matter for us, when He assists us in offering up the same; and when He leads us to leave our wills to be readily resigned to the Lord's most holy, immutable, and sovereign will. Beloved, we all find a vast difference in our prayers, and addresses to the Lord, one time from another. If we ask, how is it so? why the reason is this—we sometimes pray in the Spirit, and with the understanding also; at other times we pray only naturally, and as the fruit and effect of a mere natural devotion, and of our making conscience of the dictates of the same: which I conceive differs from that which is supernatural; and is most clearly evident to all the renewed, or new-born people of God. Believers on the Son of God, in their walk with God, and before Him unto all well-pleasing, cannot but acknowledge that there are seasons, when they are filled with the Spirit. They are at times so filled with such spiritual, inward apprehensions of Christ, and of the Father's love to them in Him, as therein and thereby to have real inward communion with the Father and the Son through the Spirit: it is then they are led to make some particular requests, both for themselves, and others; and this may give us some farther light into the subject before us. *We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* We leave our requests with the Divine Majesty; He giving us great freedom in our accesses and addresses unto Him, we are thereby assured we have had his ear. This

being evident to us, we expect to receive from Him, gracious answers : this we expect the evidence of, by his granting our petitions that we desire of Him, and as this is opened unto us in after evidences and experiences, and the same is also realized in our minds by the testimony of the Holy Ghost : and thus we are fully persuaded the Lord hath heard our prayers ; that He hath been gracious to the voice of our cry ; and hath bestowed on us, and others, the things we have desired and requested Him for. That God doth hear, and answer the prayers of his people, the scriptures most fully attest : they bear testimony of the same, with abundant evidences thereof. Answers to prayer are connected with it : this appears from what the Lord himself expresses in the following passages. "Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Ps. l. 15. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." Ps. xci. 15. "Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." Isai. lviii. 9. Nor can we give a more scriptural account, how we know, and may know for ourselves, that God hath heard, and doth hear and answer our prayers, than that which hath been given ; at least it so appears unto me.

I confess I have often been surprised, at that which I call mental or inward prayer : no doubt but I have my formality and legality, as others also have ; so as that there is an overlooking inward prayer, as not to treat it as a real and actual conversing with the Lord ; and this, because it is the free efforts of the mind, without the formality in words, we conceive it proper to clothe it with in our more particular accesses unto Him. Yet, beloved, I say for myself, I have often been astonished, how the Lord hath given evidences, of his most special notice to the same ; and proved it in me, and unto me, that this is prayer, over and over again, by his granting me the desires of my heart ; so that it has led me most highly to value this way of conversing with Christ. The wise man saith, *the desire of the righteous shall be granted* : and I have found it so. Therefore I subscribe and set my seal to this, it being the Truth of God. And if we here were to ask, What is prayer ? Is it not the desires of the mind ? Surely it must be, it is even so. When therefore we are admitted to have audience with God, to converse with Him, to express our desires before our Lord Jesus Christ, to offer up our requests unto Him, let us not forget that his ear is open to the voice of our cry : neither let us forget the words of our present text ; *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*. I proceed to my next particular :

3. To point out the assurance, which may be inferred from the Lord's hearing and answering prayer : which is this, *If we know that he hear us, we know, that whatsoever we ask, we shall receive. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*.

These words belong to all the saints, *who believe on the name of the Son of God*. It is to such only that the same belong : and they suit those in the school of Christ, who are on the lowest, as they do those who are on the highest form. They concern all who are brought to know the Lord, and serve to increase their confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst the knowledge of Christ goes before all this, yet free accesses unto Him, and real communion with Him, both in prayer and

praise, and in receiving most gracious answers to these, cannot fail, in the hand of the Lord the Spirit, of being great means of strengthening and confirming our confidence in our most dear and precious Lord Jesus Christ: of whom the apostle saith, *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* These verses united together, give great assurance to all who believe in the name of the Son of God, that their prayers will be both heard, and answered. The true knowledge of Christ, is the ground of all our confidence in Him. We have such apprehensions of his love to us, care of us, and close attention unto us, created in our minds from the word and by the Spirit, as engage us to seek his face. We, knowing Him, are led to delight ourselves in Him, and stay ourselves on Him, the God of Truth. As we cannot but be continually coming before Him, to make known our requests to Him, so there are innumerable inferences to be derived therefrom, which may be drawn to confirm our belief of this, that he doth hear and answer our petitions. We cannot know Him but by his word, and this is full of Him, and of what his heart is to us. We can converse with Him no otherwise than by faith: this can only be exercised in our thinking on Him, trusting in Him, praying to Him, and calling upon Him. *He never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* No; we never call upon the Lord with our whole heart, and seek Him with our whole desire, but He is present with us; and gives evidence that He rejoices in us and over us to do us good. If we assent to this, then the conclusion to be drawn is this, that *whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* It must be so, if the Lord hears our prayer: the true knowledge of this, our assent and consent to the same, is faith: it is the very fruit and effect of it. We believe we are heard, therefore we believe we are answered. Our faith is fixed on Christ; His word is the foundation of it. He says, "I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark xi. 24. And again he says, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22. Beloved, it is not that every thing expressed by us, any of us, is answered. No; this is not the case: the Lord looks at the substance, and that which we aim at in it: not on every thing we express therein. He hears and answers the petitions of his people, but not every thing contained in them. As it may serve to quicken your minds, I am therefore disposed to relate the following most striking and remarkable evidence, both of the free access which the Lord admits some of his saints to have with Him, and also of his ready and gracious answers which He sometimes gives to them even whilst they are praying. I have read concerning *Mr. Benjamin Keach*, a Baptist minister, who was sick and nigh unto death: "he was given over by the physician, and his family had all taken their leave of him. A Baptist brother-minister, being left alone with him, went to prayer. He obtained the ear of God, and his request also: and rising from his knees he addressed the person whom he had been praying for, thus; 'Brother *Keach*, I shall go to heaven before you, and you will live fifteen years longer.' And so it came to pass." Surely this was a most remarkable and full proof of what the Lord expresses in these words, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speak-

ing, I will hear." Isai. lxxv. 24. From whence, as also from innumerable passages of the inspired volume, the utmost assurance of the Lord's hearing and answering the prayers of his saints may be gathered: and of the knowledge which the saints have had, and may have, that the Lord doth hear their prayers and give them most gracious answers to the same; which is the very doctrine in the words before us. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* As I hope in going through the former particulars, you may have received satisfaction, in the very interesting points which have been proposed and set before you, so I will proceed to my last particular. In the which

4. I will endeavour to give you the full and clear evidence of all the former, as it respects the substance of the same; *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

There are seasons in the cases and experiences of saints, when the Lord by working inwardly on their minds, calls upon them for prayer, which is an acknowledgment that without Him they can do nothing. As one once said, "a free-willer upon his knees—why this is self-contradiction and the greatest of all absurdities—To call upon God to do that for him which he can do for himself; nay, according to his own creed the Lord cannot do, or bestow any thing upon him without the concurrence of his own free-will." Prayer is an act of faith, in and by which we renounce all dependence on ourselves, and confess that our help standeth in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. As the Lord Jesus Christ gives us the greatest encouragements to pray to Him, and to call upon the Divine Father in acts of spiritual worship, so he must also bestow on us the Spirit of grace and supplications: without which we cannot pray in faith and in the Holy Ghost. I conceive the spirit of prayer is very greatly lost; even by such as know the Lord; for some of these in what they call prayer, and when they are exercised in the same, what is there in it? Why, if the ear tries words as the mouth tasteth meat, there is nothing but this in the whole performance—A detail of Truth: a recapitulation of all the doctrines of the gospel. But is this prayer? I say no; this cannot be prayer: it is more like preaching. Others, all which they look on as prayer, and what they express in the ears of others in their devotions, is all praise and blessing. Is this prayer? No; it is not: it may most justly be brought in, when we approach the Lord; and doubtless both praise and blessing should accompany our addresses to the Divine Majesty; yet it is not that act of worship which is implied by the word *prayer*. You will, it may be, ask, What then is prayer? or what does prayer consist in? I reply, It is the simple act of the mind, going out after the Lord: it consists in speaking out and expressing our case—in imploring the Lord for help and succour—for mercy and grace according to our present cases, wants, wounds, griefs and miseries. I conceive it is most beautifully expressed thus. "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Ps. x. 17. *James* tells us, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In the margin it is, *The inwrought prayer*. It is the Holy Ghost is the Author of this inward prayer. He indites it. He works it in the mind. He gives the matter and manner. He enables the saint to offer

it up with holy fervour and energy: this is prayer; and then it is we pray in the Holy Ghost; and then we always are answered. Yea, and this is so evident, that we clearly apprehend and we have full assurance that we have had real access to Christ—that He was graciously pleased to hear us—that we have the petitions that we desired of him. And the apprehension of the same, fills the mind with unspeakable joy. It is also a motive unto, and an encouragement for our faith to make frequent visits to the throne of grace; that we may become more and better acquainted with our Lord. And what can advance this better, than being often in his company, conversing with Him, asking questions of Him, pouring out our hearts before him, receiving gracious instructions and answers from Him—This is to have real communion with Him. It is in this holy freedom, we fully perceive in our own souls, and know in our own minds that he hears us; which of itself begets the assurance which the apostle here speaks of, in the text. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Our prayers are so many petitions to our Lord. Our desire is, He would be pleased to take notice of them. When it pleaseth Him so to do, and we receive from Him that which we desired of Him, then it is very evident what we sought him for, be it on our own behalf, or that of others, was acceptable in his sight, or we should not have obtained our suit. It would be well with the people of God, in all their accesses to Christ, be it mentally, vocally, in private, in the family, in the church, or be it social prayer, to aim at having and holding communion with our Lord in the same. And as this blessing of communion is not always granted, I have learnt in my own experience, and I act accordingly, if I find no freedom and intercourse, to be very short, and not to prolong the ordinance of prayer, when I do not find myself under the influences of the Holy Ghost. I have been a great gainer by being shut up in my frames, feelings, and even in outgoings towards the Lord, at the throne; for whilst it hath not stopped the mouth in prayer, yet it hath increased the importunity of the mind, and given me to know, I can no more pray than I can make a world, by any natural power of mind. It hath also done this for me; I hereby discover, that there are seasons, both in private and public, when it is only words which I express: which makes me most heartily ashamed of the same before the Lord. Now I account in my own mind, all this, painful as it is, a real blessing: because hereby I am led to renounce myself before the Lord, to be but dust and ashes. I know it good to come to Christ in prayer, and leave out self, whilst at the same time, what I approached the Lord for, is so kept up in the memory, as to proceed with the petitions I came before Him to present, and also to be importunate with Him, to grant me, in communion with Himself, the desires of my heart. Beloved, the accesses of the mind of saints, and their free intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in the scriptures, are very encouraging. The LORD saith, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee.” Jer. xxxiii. 3; and He doth so. There is a clause in the prayer which *Solomon* put up at the dedication of the Temple which I am very fond of: the words are, “And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require.” 1 Kings

viii. 59. It is the latter clause I have my eye upon; *As the matter shall require—That he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require.* I want to attain this blessed art, of going to Christ in prayer and expressing myself before Him, exactly and precisely according to what I am just then the subject of; and to exercise faith and confidence in Him accordingly; and to consider Him as most exactly suited to me, in my present case, and frame, and feeling, want and necessity, be it what it may. Thus I want more immediately the exercise of my mind to be continually going out in prayer to Christ, this way; and to apprehend also how the heart of Christ is affected towards me, in the very case I have to express. I have not attained it but in a very small measure and degree: I have the idea of it, as also of the real benefit and blessing which would follow, continually, the practice of it: yet I have not attained the same. I am aiming at it; and the very desire and effort of the spiritual mind, towards it, I really find it to be grace. So that I sometimes think, there is more grace expressed in our spiritual desires, than there is in our spiritual attainments. May the Lord bless, if he pleases, what I have been aiming to set before you, for your spiritual encouragement. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXXVIII.

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*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.*

*There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

—I JOHN v. 16.

THESE words contain a direction how we should act toward a brother in Christ. As we have confidence in Christ, and that with regard to the petitions we present unto Him, that whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us, and we know if he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him; so the apostle is here expressing the good effect our praying for the brotherhood may have on them. The whole church of believers in Christ make but one body: they have all union and communion with Him their Head: they have all union and communion with each other in the faith. This is Christ's will concerning them; this is the case considered as the church of Christ. And this the first believers in our Lord, after his ascension into heaven, so manifested, that it is said of them, that *they were of one heart and of one soul.* It is recorded in human writings, that heathens taking notice of this, said, "see how these christians love one another." There are a variety of ways, in and by which the saints of God, express their love to each other for Christ's sake. I conceive real

prayer for each other must be one general way, by the which may be expressed and exercised their real love to Christ, and to each other for his sake; and that so particularly, as it cannot be in any other way: for it will not suit us in the present state to be too communicative to each other, about ourselves, and what passes in our minds, lest by this very means Satan gain advantage over us; and lest by it we should conceive wrongly of each other. Yet before the Lord, and when engaged with Him, and that on the behalf of his beloved, we can express ourselves, concerning each other, as it would not be convenient so to do in each other's hearing. I should value the prayers of real saints on my own behalf: yea, I should look on it as a great expression of Christ's love to me, to be set on their hearts; yet I would not give thanks for any of their prayers, I mean their secret ones, unless they prayed for me by name; and considered me the subject of a body of sin and death: and as such, that it was wholly impossible but this would so break out and manifest itself, as that I must to myself, and also to them, appear as if I were wholly chaff: as this would lead to the offering up such petitions for me, as would suit the case exactly; and this, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, would be so diversified, that my case would always, for the substance of the same, be taken notice of, and comprehended in their requests for me. There is in the true church of Christ, and amongst the real people of God, some sinful cases: and these befall the saints; and they, and their cases are not to be overlooked, neither are we to treat them with contempt. As their fallen nature is the subject of all contained in *Adam's* fall, so there is no sin but fallen nature is inclined unto. The Lord hath set bounds to our sinnings, so as that we cannot go beyond the limits of the same: yet, there is but one sin, the elect of God may not fall by; and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost. So that in a state of unregeneration, or in the course of a time state, the elect of God, considered in the whole body of them, are guilty of all sorts and kinds of sin: one in one way, and another in another, and this according to their various and particular constitutions. Some sin most grievously in their natural state: and some fall into acts of sin, of various sorts after they are converted to the Lord. This hath been my case; I have lived a greater length of time since I knew the Lord: I have sinned more mentally, than in act; yet sin is sin: it is as truly so in thought as in deed, and all sin must first begin there. It may be we may see a brother sin: or by hearsay be informed of it: What is to be done for him? Are we on this at once to fall reproving him for the same? Are we not to cast him immediately out of our prayers? No; we are neither to do the one nor the other. We are to look on him as a brother still: yea, as a brother in Christ. The advice the apostle gives us, by way of direction in this case, is as follows. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* In opening and explaining these words, I will propose the following order: hoping thereby to compress the whole substance of them, so as to give you the clear and express meaning of each particular contained in them. I will begin thus:

1. To set before you the case here expressed by the apostle; *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death.* This most assuredly implies, a brother in Christ may sin. He is a brother still.



He stands in the same relationship to Christ, and the saints, which he did before.

2. What is to be done for the sinning brother, and on his behalf, by him who hath seen, or heard that a brother hath sinned? He shall pray for him. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death: this limitation shall be taken notice of.*

3. A solemn assertion of the apostle: *There is a sin unto death: what this sin is, will be briefly declared.*

4. The prohibition not to pray for such; *I do not say that he shall pray for it.* I hope in going over these particulars, we shall have true satisfaction of what is expressed by the apostle in the words now before us.

1. I am to set before you the case here expressed by the apostle; *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death: which most assuredly implies, a brother in Christ may sin: yet be it so, he is a brother in Christ still.* He stands in the same relationship to Christ, and saints, which he did before.

The beginning of the sentence before us, is very like the same, in the which the apostle expresses himself in the 1st verse of the 2nd chapter of this Epistle. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate." And here it is, *If any man see his brother sin.* It cannot be *any man*, as if it were all men universally. Christ is not an Advocate but for his own. Therefore, as *Mr. Romaine* used to say, it is the *us*, whom the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth from all sin; they are the persons included in the terms, *if any man sin.* Sin is of a damnable nature: and all who commit sin and die in their sins, will be damned for the same. So here, *If any man see his brother sin a sin.* This must also be confined to the saints and beloved of God. It is equal to what the apostle *James* on the same subject, expresseth thus—"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." ch. v. 19, 20. The saints of God have sin in them. It may be expected they will in various instances fall by it: some secretly; some so as for it to be known. This is the case before us; nor should the people of God be too much surprised on account of it. *If any man see his brother sin.* This cannot but imply it is an outward act of sin. What this may consist in is not expressed: nor needed it to be. Every one of us has his own personal, peculiar, and constitutional sin: and it is only that, we can fall by. And so it comes to pass, that none of us, no, not if any of you are saints of the highest magnitude in the church of Christ, are so saved from our constitutional sin, as, it may be, we conceive. We are saved from the dominion of sin. We are neither in a sinful state; nor are we under the reign and power of sin; yet as we are not saved from the inbeing of sin, so neither are we saved from actual sins. So that at times we are in sinful cases, and our case is sinful: yet we are not at the same time in a sinful state, we having been brought out from thence, by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, in his act of regeneration within us, and upon us. A brother in Christ may sin; yet he does not cease to be our brother. He stands in the same relationship to Christ, and saints, which

he did before : and if our Lord Jesus Christ is an Intercessor and Advocate for his people, so their sins do not put a stop to the same : so far from this, that our apostle saith, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And he is the propitiation for our sins.* Surely then it well becomes us, to pray one for another, when we hear, and are witnesses of each other's infirmities. This most evidently is the doctrine of the apostle here in the text now before us. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.*

It cannot but grieve the holy brethren, when any of them so fall by sin, as to be guilty of the commission of the same. It may be, nay, it cannot but be the case of some who are real saints, so to fall by sin, as thereby to dishonour Christ, his cause, and people : yet, even admit of this, still, it is by no means acting like believers in Christ, to reject any one in such a state, as a brother in Christ on this account. We should not expose such an one ; neither should we join others, saying, *Report, and we will report it.* We know not what awaits us. Our brother is fallen to-day : it may be we shall fall to-morrow. I never found myself severe towards a brother in Christ, fallen through the influence and prevalency of indwelling sin, but I have soon after fallen myself into my own besetting sin. There is no circumstance, or case, a regenerated saint can be in, which draws out my heart, and bowels of compassion towards him, as when I hear, and know his sinful cases ; as I know by inward experience, what such does, and must, and cannot but feel. As I can conceive that which passeth in their minds, I am peculiarly tender towards such. I would by no means add to their griefs, by speaking to them of their particular case, yet at the same time, if they were disposed to open the whole to me, I would do all I could, to encourage their faith and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, who saith, *I am the LORD that healeth thee.* It may be you will condemn this in me : be it so ; yet I am sure that this is the true spirit of the gospel : our text is full proof of this. Beloved, if what hath taken place in a brother, by means of his having fallen into sin, makes no alteration in his state before God : If he stands in the same relation to Christ, and to saints also, as he did before, why then should I not treat him as a brother, although he hath sinned ? and it is so and so with him ? It may be you will object, and say, It seems to us it would be to make light of sin : it appears to us, as if you would encourage and embolden such an one in his sin, and encourage him in the commission of the same. I say, my friends, this be far from me. The Lord himself forbid I should, in any way, or by any means give countenance to sin, or encouragement to commit it. The Lord God of his infinite mercy forbid this : may I not say your thoughts are altogether wrong on this subject. I am speaking of a brother in Christ : it may be you are involving together with this, all outward professors ; I am not. You will ask, where, and how will you draw the line of distinction, and how will you know the one from the other ? I reply, thus, Such as are only outward professors, they, as considered as such, are not born of the Spirit : it is only such as are born again, which I look on as belonging to the brotherhood. It is therefore one that is new-born, whom I call a brother in Christ. You will say, how do you define such an one ? And how do you know him from all others ? To this I reply, he is one who is brought to a saving, gospel knowledge of the Person, and Salva-

tion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the sublime truths of the everlasting gospel: this is my definition of a brother in Christ. And the only evidence, I have, or can have of him as such, must be by the account which he gives me, concerning his knowledge of Christ; as also how he was brought to the knowledge of Him: and also of the fellowship which he hath with the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit. This is the one only way, I should myself propose, to have the true knowledge of a brother in Christ. And suppose I am out in the individual person to whom I may apply all this, yet I am not out in the definition of him, be he who he may—that such an one as all this belongs unto, is a real brother in Christ. As my love to a brother in Christ, will at times lead me to long to have holy fellowship with him, to wish his spiritual welfare, to pray for him, to cover and hide his infirmities, and so, if he is fallen, and hath committed sin, to make his case my own: and I cannot but apply myself to Christ on his behalf. Beloved, I here ask you, is not this most exactly suited to the words before us—*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* This is not confined to the pastors, elders, deacons, and members of a church. No; it is here expressed, as that grace, which is to be exercised by one individual saint, and brother in Christ towards another; without any consideration of sustaining any office in the church. *If any man see his brother sin a sin,* let him act so and so on his behalf: most certainly this is the genuine meaning of the words. I proceed with the subject. And I am

2. To enquire and set before you, what is to be done by a brother in Christ, on the behalf of one which hath sinned a sin. He is to pray for him: this must be suited to the case: the address is to be to Christ. There is an assurance it will be answered; so that life will be granted to the person who hath sinned. What this life is, and who is the giver of it, shall according to the best light and judgment I have of the scripture before us, be given. And all this shall be included under this present head of discourse, hoping it will be the better understood, and be the more acceptable unto you. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* *There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* The sin unto death is the unpardonable sin, or, the sin against the Holy Ghost. This will be opened and spoken of under our next head of discourse; so that no notice will be taken of it here.

As our Lord Jesus Christ hears us, when we pray to him on our own account, so he also hears us, on the behalf of others. Nothing ought to break in, and interrupt the love of one brother in Christ to another. Whatsoever befalls each other in this present time state, should be the means of exciting it, and be as a suitable reason and motive, to draw it forth into fresh act and exercise. Nothing is in its own nature more likely to stop the mutual intercourse of one brother in Christ, to another, than the knowledge they may have of each other's infirmities: hence it is absolutely necessary for our own peace, and the harmony of the brethren, to keep our particular infirmities to ourselves; yet this cannot always be done. There are some matters which may befall us, which cannot be concealed; and it may be necessary in some certain cases, and with regard to some particular circumstances, to unfold and express to others in the Lord, how matters are with us, both as it respects our

inward and personal corruptions, as also concerning the state of our minds, under some peculiar temptations. Yet this requires great prudence and caution; neither are all, who are the called of God in Christ Jesus, suited to be admitted into such intimate fellowship with their fellow-saints, in every particular case and circumstance; which some individuals may know, and by their true judgment of the same, be the better directed how to pray for such and such. The worst case which can possibly befall us, as saints, is that of a sinful one. The sighs and inward sorrows of the regenerated mind, on account of the indwelling of sin, and the out-breakings of the same, be it either in thought, in word, or deed, exceed all expression. *Paul* cried out on such accounts, *O wretched man that I am!* so do all the Lord's called people; yet some more, others less. Some of them are most remarkably kept, from the out-breaking of their inward sinfulness; whilst others of them, are scarce ever able to overcome themselves, but are again and again overcome: this leads us to our present subject. The brother who hath not sinned, it is because he hath not been overcome by his own inward corruptions. The brother who hath sinned, it is because he hath been overcome by his inward and inherent sinfulness: this being the case, he is the proper subject for the exercise of pity and compassion. Who can act thus towards him, but a brother in Christ? This is the very person who is spoken of in the text, and he is called upon so to do—*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* If the one brother in Christ, had not seen and known, that a brother in Christ had fallen into sin, and that at present his case was a sinful one, there had been no use of this direction, how he should act toward, and on the behalf of such an one, as is contained in the words before us. If the brother in Christ, is to ask the Lord in prayer, on the behalf of a brother, who hath brought himself into a sinful case, what is this but to pray for him? And most assuredly his request is to be suitable, and suited to the sinful case of the brother, that hath sinned. The petitioner is to make his brother's case his own; so as in a particular way and manner to address the Lord on the behalf of his brother, who hath sinned: entreating the Lord Jesus Christ to break forth towards him, to shine within him, and upon him, in the display of his rich grace and mercy; and thus to heal the backslider, and save him from further backslidings—To receive him graciously—To love him freely; and thus to restore comfort unto him, and to his mourners. This is the manner and the method, for the substance of it, in which the brother in Christ, interests himself, on the behalf of his brother who hath sinned: praying the Lord Jesus Christ to manifest himself to him, just as he did to *Peter* when he was left to deny his Lord; yet as the Lord turned and looked upon him, so the brother in Christ, requests the same grace, as to the substance of it, may be expressed and displayed on this brother in Christ, who hath sinned a sin which is not unto death. All sin deserves eternal death. *Christ hath borne all the sins of his people, in his own body on the tree.* He hath also sustained the whole curse due unto the same: an irrevocable act of pardon is pronounced upon the footing of this. The Divine Father saith to all the elect of *Adam's* posterity, your sins, and your iniquities will I remember no more. The saints cannot *sin a sin that is unto death*, because Christ hath died for them. Not but

their sins, and every act and what is contained in their sin and sinfulness deserve damnation, as truly as sin can in any sense, or any consideration deserve the same. It is the bloodshedding, sacrifice, and death of Christ is their discharge therefrom. I would here ask, whom is the brother in Christ to address, and what is he to ask for, on the behalf of the brother who hath sinned? I answer, he is to address Christ, and to request his manifestative favour and pardon. Why do you so say? I reply, for the following reasons—Because Christ is the Person spoken of in the past verses: and also because it is said in the words before us, the brother in Christ shall obtain this blessing, *that he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* I will here join the two former verses, that you may see Christ is the Person who is to be addressed on the behalf of the brother, *who hath sinned a sin which is not unto death. And this is the confidence that we have in him, or concerning him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* I think it most clearly appears from reading these three verses, Christ is the Person who is to be addressed: it being from him, all pardon comes: He having shed his blood for the remission of our sins. The brother in Christ, addresseth Him, who is the Advocate of his sinning people, on the behalf of a brother whose case is a sinful one: entreating the Lord to shine in upon his mind afresh, with a present sense and manifestation of his love, grace, and pardoning mercy. In answer to his prayer, the Lord doth: hereby the fallen brother is restored to such a sense and enjoyment thereof, that it re-animates spiritual life in him, so as from a real sense of Christ's pardoning mercy, he rejoices in the same. Thus the one asks; and the other receives life: which alone comes from Christ, it is the fruit of his royal grace.

But may it not here be asked, Is it not the man who sees his brother *sin a sin which is not unto death*, who seeks to the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of it, and that He would be pleased to manifest the same, to the brother who hath committed sin; may it not be said of him, *that he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death?* I confess I think so: and that this is equal with the words of the other apostle who says, *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.* It seems to me, these verses are so related one to the other, that they serve to explain each other. If this be granted, then I should understand the words of our text thus: *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death*—So as to apply the giving of life, to the brother in Christ who has been interceding with Christ, on the behalf of a brother who has sinned: and this is to be understood as the fruit and effect of his prayers, on the behalf of him for whom he has been praying. This life then must consist in a restoration to his former state of holy walking with God: and it must be of the same nature with saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins, as expressed in the other text which hath been quoted from *James.* *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* There is this certain

limitation to praying for a brother in Christ: he is one that *sins not unto death*. Therefore whilst the text is very expressive of the good effects our prayers may have on others, and how we may obtain blessings for them from Christ, yet the life received, and the grace manifested, seem to be predicated of the person, and here ascribed unto him, who thus performs this christian act on the behalf of his brother, although it must all in the ultimate view of it, wholly belong and be attributed unto our Lord Jesus Christ. As the apostle says, *There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it*, so I will now consider this part of the subject before me.

3. This most solemn assertion of the apostle: *There is a sin unto death*: what this sin is, shall be briefly declared.

The sin unto death being unpardonable; what can be more likely to be included in this term, than the sin against the Holy Ghost? I confess I think this is what the apostle here means. And if so, then it follows it was committed by some, who were under a profession, or, who had been under a profession of Christ in the apostle's day. It also seems that such were the effects which followed the commission of it, as it might be known by saints, who were, and who were not guilty of the same. Why should the apostle say, if it was not so, such should not be prayed for, as he here doth, if there was not some outward self-evident proof, that such and such were guilty of this great transgression; which must have tended unto, and could not but end in a total apostacy from Christ, and a renunciation of his most blessed gospel. When I was on the 7th and 8th verses of the 3rd chapter of this Epistle, I opened and shewed what the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is here styled *a sin unto death* was: as also I then declared, and also now declare it to be my opinion, that it is impossible it ever more can be committed. I refer you to that Sermon for all I have said, or can say upon this subject. It is here styled *a sin unto death*; for this reason, because eternal damnation is connected with the commission of it: such cannot escape the damnation of hell: our Lord having said, "I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Matt. xii. 31, 32. This is the sin unto death, and I have fully and freely said what I have conceived of the same from the scriptures of Truth, in the Sermon on these words in the 3rd chapter of this Epistle; "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." To this Sermon I refer you, and proceed to my last particular, which is this; that we are not to pray for such: therefore I am here,

4. To set before you the prohibition of the apostle, that we are not to pray for such: *I do not say that he shall pray for it*.

Christ hath declared it to be unpardonable. The saints of God cannot therefore commit it: their sins, past, present, and to come, are freely forgiven them, for the Lord's great Name's sake. The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth them from all sin: if any of them sin,

they have Christ for their Advocate with the Father. If one brother in Christ see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he may pray for him. He ought so to do. He is commanded to ask of Christ, on his behalf, a display of His glorious grace, in the free and manifestative expressions of his loving-kindness unto him; but no such prayer, no, nor any prayer is to be offered for him who hath *sinned the sin unto death*. *There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* The assertion is solemn and most truly awful: to be brief on it; the sin unto death must consist, in the nature of it, in a total apostasy. The child of God, may again and again, be in a sinful case: yet he can never totally apostatize from the Lord: that is our mercy. This being the case, let neither pastors, elders, churches, nor any of the saints, treat unkindly such of the brethren whose cases are sinful, who are, and may be found amongst them. Rather let them take the following advice from the apostle *Paul*, and practise the same. He says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. 1, 2. Our apostle saith, *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* The apostle *James* saith to the same effect. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." To which *Peter* sets his seal; saying, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The Lord bless his Truth. Amen.

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## SERMON LXXXIX.

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*All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.—*

1 JOHN v. 17.

As the apostle had spoken in the former verse, concerning the case of a brother in Christ who had sinned; how he was still to be considered as a brother: so that such a brother in Christ as knew his sin, was to pray for him, and be the means of giving him life, by his interceding with our Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf, he not having sinned a sin which is unto death: the apostle, lest any should conceive as if sin committed by any in Christ was not sin, comes in here with this assertion; saying, *All unrighteousness is sin*. Yet at the same time he most solemnly asserts this truth, even the same which he had given evidence of before, that *there is a sin not unto death*. Therefore such as were not guilty of the sin unto death, were to be prayed for, even when they had sinned: this is most

certainly the apostle's doctrine. To prove it, I will recite the former words, and join them with the present, that their connection may the more evidently appear. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.* And therefore a brother who is fallen into any sin, except it be the sin unto death, is to be pitied and prayed for. He who is fallen into the sin unto death, is not to be prayed for. To the end therefore that real saints might not sink into themselves, and be swallowed up of over-much sorrow, through Satan's suggestions, when they, any of them, were fallen into the commission of sin, and under any of his temptations, be led to conceive in their minds, they had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, the apostle comes in here, by way of support and consolation. Saints are not sinless: therefore they are not in such a state as to be incapable of sinning. They will be impeccable in the state of glory, but not in the state of grace. They are now in Christ, without all sin, as considered in Him: their sins have all been transferred from their persons, unto the Person of Christ, and he hath put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. And whilst they are in such a state, as that there is not one single condemnation in the court of heaven against them, and the blood of Christ is their eternal purity, and his righteousness their everlasting perfection, and their persons accepted in the Person of the Beloved, the God-Man; yet all this, and their true knowledge of all this, and their communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, in the right knowledge and spiritual apprehension of all this, do not free them from being the subjects of sin: yea, of the whole body of it, with all contained in the same. Therefore they are in danger of falling into some acts of sin, so long as they are in their present bodies, and in this present world: and *All unrighteousness is sin*; let it be in whatsoever form or act it may. The saints cannot but acknowledge this: and that in many things we offend all of us; and as to mental sin, and heart-wanderings from the Lord, who can tell how oft he offendeth? and even in thought, word, and deed, who can by any means fully comprehend, what sin he is the subject of, which escapes his notice continually; hence it was absolutely necessary for the apostle to guard the saints, by the true knowledge of the subject, on all sides: that we might not look on sin, as if there was no evil in it, and so make nothing of our falls into it: nor be too much distressed by any sinful case, which might at any time be ours, so as for us to overcharge ourselves, as if we were guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost. But that preserving this in our minds, that there is a sin which is not unto death, and that we are the subjects in which sin is, and are liable to fall into sin by various causes; so also he sets before us what sin is; which when we consider it as he expresseth the same, we cannot but avoid it, and tremble at the very thought of falling by it. And when our case is sinful, the apostle would not have us sink too much under it: for it is not unpardonable. I think this the outline of our present text; *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.* The words contain these two particulars:

1. That *All unrighteousness is sin.* Under the term *unrighteousness*, is, as I conceive, comprehended the whole contained in sin. How the expression is suited to this, I will aim to shew: as also the com-



prehensiveness of this expression : and likewise that as all sin is condemned by the law ; so the gospel, which is the only remedy for a sinner, from the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, gives not the least encouragement to sin, or sinning : and that such as think so, *have not the knowledge of God*. When I have gone through this, and cleared up the same unto you : then I will

2. Open this part of the text, and set forth this declaration of the apostle, *and there is a sin not unto death* : and also give the apostle's reasons for this assertion ; and the use we are to make of the same. May the Lord himself guide me through these particulars, in perfect agreement with his most holy Truth, so as neither to turn to the right hand, nor to the left. May it be even so. Amen. I now begin ; and

1. I am to set before you, that *All unrighteousness is sin* : and that under this term, *unrighteousness*, as I conceive, is comprehended the whole contained in sin : then I am to shew, how the expression is suited unto this. As also the comprehensiveness of this expression : and likewise that as all sin is condemned by the law, and the commission of the same forbidden, upon pain of eternal damnation ; so the gospel, which is, and contains the only remedy for a sinner, from the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, gives not the least encouragement to sin, or sinning : and that such as conceive and think so, *have not the knowledge of God* : each of these particulars I am to work upon, and set before you under this present head of discourse—*All unrighteousness is sin*.

Under the term of *unrighteousness*, is included the whole contained in *sin* ; and it may be very properly so conceived ; for what is *sin*, but *unrighteousness* ? Is it not the transgression of God's most holy law ? Does it not consist in not giving to the law, that obedience it calls for and requires ? Most undoubtedly it is even so. Then under this very term of *unrighteousness*, the nature of sin, the guilt and filth of the same, the demerit of it, and the curse due unto it, may be considered as contained, and as vastly comprehensive, as suited to this subject. Our apostle says, " Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is the transgression of the law." chap. iii. 4. The first who ever broke God's law was the wicked one, called the devil. The next, were the angels who revolted with him, and who brake the same holy law of God, and are called his angels, by our Lord, in these words which are one day to be pronounced on all the sinners of mankind, who shall live and die in their sins ; " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41. The old serpent called the devil, overcame the first man and woman, so that they broke the holy law of God. And all mankind being in the first man, and he being their head and root from whom they were all to proceed ; by his breaking the law, and the corruption of his nature by the fall ; all sinned in him, and as such we are all transgressors ; and are rebels and law-breakers : " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom. iii. 23, 20. As *sin* is *unrighteousness*, it being an unrighteous act, so *All unrighteousness is sin*, in every act and instance of it : let it be in thought, in word, in work, in will, in affection, in inclination, in desire ; it is sin : it is in the lowest as well as in the highest instance of it, exceeding sinful : it is damnable. God in his holy law, declares and pronounces his curse against it. Our

apostle says, *All unrighteousness is sin*. The term *unrighteousness*, as it is suited to express what *sin* is, so it comprehends all contained in this evil, *sin*; which consists in taking off the heart wholly from the Lord, in the transgression of God's holy law, in corrupting the whole will, so that the sinner is a rebel against the Most High God. And the whole mind, body and soul, are so totally corrupted and ruined, that no words can express, nor mind conceive, the evils that it hath introduced into our nature, under the which sinners and saints groan: it is impossible we should express them fully. As by the term *unrighteousness*, sin is very comprehensively expressed by the apostle in the words before us, *All unrighteousness is sin*, so the nature of sin, the guilt, impurity, and demerit of it, may most clearly be understood. The nature of sin, what is it? What does it consist in? I reply, in this—it is a contrariety to the Nature, Holiness, Truth, and Perfections of God. The law of God is the will of God. To transgress it, therefore, is to be a rebel and traitor. The guilt of this transgression, and the full effect of it, are in the mind. The sinner is the subject of the inward guilt brought upon him by transgression: this hath brought with it such an impurity into the conscience, or mind, as there is no freedom from by any act we can perform. The demerit of sin is eternal damnation, which is the most just and righteous displeasure of God against sin. As all sin, and every act of the same, is condemned by God's most holy law, so the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, contains an account of the only salvation provided for sinful men. God's law is holy, and his gospel is holy. *Paul* says, *the law is holy, and just, and good*: so are all the acts of God's will in Christ, respecting salvation by Him, as it is revealed and made known by the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. It is the gospel is the only remedy for a sinner; and it is a complete one, as it contains this in the same—That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—That He hath obeyed the whole law—That He hath stood in the place, room, and stead of his people, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God—That He bore the sins of his people in his own body, and hath put them away by the sacrifice of himself; and that his blood, now and evermore, cleanseth from all sin. It is by the spiritual and right apprehension of the same, that we are saved in our own minds, from the sense, guilt, filth, and burden of our own personal sins: so as to rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, and hath made full atonement, which when it is given us to receive the revealed account of, into our minds, then we have peace with God through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The saints whom the apostle is here speaking unto, they were believers on the Son of God: they lived by the faith of the Son of God; yet they were not incapable of falling partially into sin. They knew the efficacy of the death of Christ in their own souls; yet they well knew that what the Lord Jesus Christ had done and suffered, had made no alteration in sin. The nature of it was as damnable, as defiling, as odious in the sight of God as ever. I would here observe, if there are any persons who sit under the true preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and conceive that sin in the nature of it is changed, they err. No; neither the love of the Father to our persons in Christ before the world began; nor the acceptableness of the Person of Christ, nor his obedience and sacrifice, by the which he hath magnified the law and made it ever-

lastingly honourable: nor his agonies, blood-sweat and passion, hath taken away any part of the nature, guilt, filth, and demerit of sin. This evil is what it ever was. Our Lord hath given full evidence of the exceeding evil contained in the same: this appears in that nothing short of his own Personal obedience to the law, and fulfilling it, by yielding entire and complete obedience to the same, could answer the demands thereof: nothing short of the Father's making Him *sin* by imputation, and inflicting on Him, the whole curse due to the sins of the whole election of grace, could answer the demands of infinite justice. And as by the gospel, we are led to understand, that Christ gave himself for his church, He substituted his Person for our persons, He gave his soul for our souls, His blood for our bloods, His life for our lives, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by His being made a curse for us, so hereby we see the holiness of the Divine Nature as fully displayed in the revelation of God's grace, made known by the glorious gospel of the blessed God; so as it outshines, the display of the holiness of God's will made manifest in the law. There is no connivance at any sin, nor the least relaxation from holy duties, nor any thing in the whole system of grace to give countenance to the commission of the least unrighteousness: so that no one can have a right apprehension, and true knowledge of the Gospel, and be a *Baxterian*, a *Neonomian*, an *Arminian*, nor *Antinomian*: as these are all mistaken, both with regard to the doctrines of the gospel, and also with regard to the grace of the gospel. It may be, that to prevent any, who might be but under a bare profession of the gospel, then, and all who ever shall be brought under the confession of its truths and ordinances to the end of time, from conceiving, they might commit sin, and it would not be of any injury to them, nor the cause of God either, seeing the Gospel is a glorious record of the grace, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, towards a world of sinners, *saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation*, it is that the apostle expressed himself thus: *All unrighteousness is sin*. And, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18.

In the Person of Christ, in the holiness, purity, and perfection of Christ, in the obedience of Christ to the law for his people, in his bearing their sins, in his carrying their sorrows, in his agony and bloody-sweat, in his sustaining the curse by being made a curse for us, in his dereliction on the cross—we have a full view of God's holiness and hatred of sin: of his infinite hatred and indignation against it. So that a poor sinner brought by the teachings of the Holy Ghost to the knowledge of Christ, and salvation by him, cannot be thus favoured, and love sin. He cannot live in sin, no; nor can he practise it. The love of Christ constrains him, to love Christ, and live to his glory: the wounds which Christ received in His soul and body, to heal him, forbid his living in any known sin; the knowledge that Christ himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, contains this doctrine herein, which produceth this effect on true believers in Him, and it is, *that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*. The apostle *Paul* saith, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. The

same apostle writing to *Titus*, saith, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." chap. ii. 11—14. It is the true knowledge of Christ, and right apprehensions of the doctrines of grace, which produce all this in us, and also discover the same in our lives and conversations. I hope I have gone through the outline which was proposed under this first head, and shewn, that *All unrighteousness is sin*. It is so in saints as truly as it is in sinners. God hates sin in the one, as truly as he doth in the other; yet the one is not cut off from God, whilst the other will be for ever: the reason is not because the sinfulness of the one is not as truly detestable as the other: no; that is not the cause; but the persons of the one were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world: the others were not. And the sins of the former were put away by Christ; the others were not; the one are washed in the blood of Christ, and his righteousness is imputed to them; it is not so with the others; they are in their sins, and will be condemned for the same: in all which there is a vast and glorious evidence of Divine sovereignty; such as we may admire, whilst we cannot fathom; yet there is the utmost propriety in the divine conduct of Jehovah: there is *no unrighteousness in God*. His acts are founded in justice, judgment, and equity; whilst they are beyond our apprehensions, and are for us to adore Him for, not to attempt in the least to search into them. I will proceed to the

2nd Part of my text, and attempt to set forth this declaration of the apostle, *and there is a sin not unto death*: which seems thus expressed, that he might give them support, so as that what he had said before, might not be misunderstood.

If all unrighteousness is sin, and there is not a man in Christ, no, not one of these, although he be in a justified state, that liveth and sinneth not, it might be that some of the saints, who had been in sinful cases, might be too much cast down. Even, if it be supposed this was not the case, and they were too well acquainted with the Truth as it is in Jesus, to have any controversy in their minds concerning what the amount and nature of their sins were; yet it could not but be satisfactory to them, to know the vast difference at the worst, which was between their sin, and the sin of apostates. Now it is this which the apostle, most certainly, distinguishes upon in his here saying, *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death*. Every act of sin is in its own nature damnable. It is so, as it respects the sin and sinfulness of such as are born of God, as really as it is the truth of such as are not born again. The everlasting love of God in Christ, to the elect in Him, makes no alteration in the nature of sin. The substitution of the Person of Christ, makes an exchange of his Person, in the room and stead of his people; yet this does not make their sin and sinfulness what it was not. It is by the whole of it, being removed from them, and laid upon Christ, that they are without all sin, as it respects the non-imputation of it, and that they are freely pardoned and acquitted from all their transgressions. Whilst this proves how highly acceptable their persons are in Christ;

yet it does not prove their sin and sinfulness were ever so before the Lord. No; it is an everlasting evidence to the contrary. Their regeneration by the Spirit, and being in a state of grace, this does not make their sin and sinfulness less hateful in the sight of God: neither does this; no, nor even their knowledge of Christ, and personal communion with Him, extract sin out of their fallen nature, nor hinder them from being sensibly affected at times, with their actual commission of sin. It is an immutable truth, that it is well with them, and they are only safe, when, and whilst they are looking off themselves, and their sins altogether, and so looking unto Christ, and believing the virtue and efficacy of his blood and righteousness, as to be wholly swallowed up in this subject. But this is not at all times the case with them; therefore they want to know this distinction, and what is contained in the same, which the apostle here makes, in his saying, *and there is a sin not unto death*. I would here recite the former verse, as it stands connected with this and will cast farther light upon the same. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.* As we read both verses, I think it most clearly appears, the apostle aims to relieve the minds of saints, and more and most especially such of them, as had been and now were in some sinful cases. And as he had spoken of a sin unto death, how could he more effectually do this, than by giving them to know, they had not been, neither could they be guilty of this. All sin is sin: yet *there is a sin not unto death*: which is as it were giving them to understand, their sins were not only washed out by the most precious blood of Christ, and freely pardoned, but as it was impossible for them to fall into any one single sinful case, but the same was pardonable; so he would they should be relieved in their own minds from the consideration of this. They lived in an age of apostacy, when the worst of crimes were committed by such wretches: who, *turning the doctrines of grace into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*; were guilty of the sin unto death. When the saints were, and it is even so to this present time, in sinful cases, Satan would present before them the falls and sins of others, and suggest to them their cases were similar, and that such were never restored: therefore he would not have them expect to be restored from their falls; seeing, they may think and say as they please, yet certain it is, many have fallen, and their profession and case, and sin, been very like theirs, who were never raised up again. This is the devil's logic, and he reasons thus, with many of the saints, when their cases are sinful. Whilst, as I conceive, the apostle well knowing how likely they were to be too much distressed hereby, says, *All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death*: he would not have them entertain such apprehensions of what might and could not but befall them, over and over, in their passing through this present time state, as that the same should abate their confidence in God, or so interrupt their communion with the Three in Jehovah, as to render them without full evidence of their everlasting love to them; of their interest in them; of their care for them; of their delight in them. And that these persons, who are here spoken unto by the apostle, should not on any occasion, or by any means, have the least doubt of this, our apostle here speaks by way of

relieving their minds. He would not that they should over-rate their own cases; nor make more of their sinful cases, than the truth would admit of. True it was, they might have sinned: if so, their case must consequently be a sinful one: this must be admitted of; yet they were not in a sinful state. Their case most probably had been the same again and again. We are not willing to acknowledge it, we who are saints, yet so it is—our whole experience consists, in falls, and recoveries out of them by grace. And it is a very peculiar relief to our minds, at various seasons, and under various sinnings, and circumstances, to be informed, it is the very same with all the holy brethren. I think the subject now before us is the very same which the apostle expresseth in these words; “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Cor. x. 13.

All the saints hate sin with an invincible hatred: yea, they also hate themselves for it, when they fall by it; let it be even the sin of their constitution, they can with truth say, each individual of them for themselves, *the evil which I would not, that I do*. Therefore if any think that saints as saints, love sin; that they indulge themselves, and are well pleased they are again and again in a sinful case; it must be said, that these err, not knowing the scriptures, neither the power of God. The real saint finds hell in sin, and sin, hell. He may be overcome by it, but he shall never be finally overcome with it. He shall never sin beyond the bounds of free grace. He shall never sin that sin against the Holy Ghost, which is here styled, the sin unto death. And that the child of God never can, is most confidently asserted in the words which follow our present text; which we shall soon enter upon. All sins, as well before conversion, as those which are committed after, are all within the limits of a full, royal, and gracious free-grace pardon. This is expressed by our apostle in the words before us, *and there is a sin not unto death*. Beloved, I have done my best in opening the text, and giving the best interpretation of the same. You may depend on it, we must not exclude sin from believers, for then we shall really injure them; as much, in a sense, as if we denied, that all their sins were so taken off them and removed from them to the Person of Christ, as that hereby they have no sin imputed unto them. The one is the subject for faith to be exercised on, the other for sanctified and spiritual sense. The Lord give you a right apprehension of this, and bless you with the true knowledge of the same. Amen.

## SERMON XC.

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*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

—1 JOHN v. 18.

THESE words appear to me, to be a continuation of the former subject, that the people of God are so preserved, that they neither are, nor can be guilty of the sin unto death. No doubt but there were certain proofs, and evidences which followed upon the commission of the unpardonable sin, so as that such and such were to be known. And sins which were not unto death, but were pardonable through the most precious blood-shedding of our most precious Lord and Saviour, were so distinct from the other, that it might be most easily discerned. Yet the real saint, when his case was a sinful one, might, as we still find such as have been left to themselves, frequently do, fear lest their guilt should be of the same nature and kind with the other. Therefore the apostle aims at the settlement of their minds, and the ease of their consciences in that which he here delivers unto them : by directing them how to act if they saw a brother, or sister, who had fallen by transgression. He would have such as were acquainted that such an one had sinned a sin which is not unto death, to pray on his behalf ; as hereby the Lord would most assuredly manifest his pardoning mercy to the brother in Christ, who had sinned. The apostle then that he might be rightly understood, distinguisheth between the sin unto death, and that which is not so : saying, *There is a sin unto death* : and whoever had committed it, was not to be prayed for. Which is I think, an evidence, that such carried about with them, the evident marks of their being reprobates, and that they were eternally rejected of the Lord. As the apostle knew real saints had all sin in them, and lest from his expression on both these subjects any undue use might be made of the same, he adds, as by way of explanation, *All unrighteousness is sin* : then he distinguishes the sin which is not unto death, from all others. By *death*, eternal damnation is designed. He refers to the sin against the Holy Ghost : what this sin is, and consists in, hath been expressed in the course of this lecture ; to the which I again refer, as I did in my Sermon on the 16th verse of this present chapter. I have suggested, it cannot be committed in our day, in the Sermon delivered on the 7th and 8th verses of the 3rd chapter of this Epistle : *Dr. Lightfoot* thinks so also, as he also does concerning the profanation of the Lord's Supper, in the manner in the which some of the *Corinthians* did ; so as for the apostle to say unto them, " Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. I am of the same opinion ; but then it is to be observed, I lay the stress on the cor-

rupting the institution, not on an unworthy approach to it. Our Lord Jesus Christ saith, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Mark iii. 28—30. Our apostle had, doubtless, these words in his eye, and he writes accordingly: it being this sin which is the only one that, as to the commission of evil, distinguishes the elect and the reprobate. And as regeneration separates the one from the other, therefore the apostle here says, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* That, if the Lord please, we may have all contained in these words before us, and that if the Lord will, we may also have the right apprehension of the same, I will treat them in the following order;

1. By considering what the apostle here saith of himself under the term *We*: this is to be our beginning, therefore I will set this before you. He expresseth himself thus, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* What he here declares, I shall attempt to explain from other passages in this same Epistle: hoping thereby to explain my text, without embarrassing the minds of any of the people of God. And also to the credit of the apostle, proving that he is not here contradicting himself: so far is this from it, that what he here says, according to his own meaning, contains in the assertion immutable Truth. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.*

2. I will explain what the apostle expresses, concerning *one born of God*, in these words, and his description of such an one; *But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself; and that wicked one toucheth him not.* How the person born of God, *keepeth himself*, from whom he keepeth himself, and who *that wicked one* is, from whom he keepeth himself; as also how he is hereby preserved, so as *that wicked one toucheth him not*, shall be shewed and set before you, so far as the Lord shall enable me. Likewise in what sense we are to understand, that the wicked one toucheth him not. I shall aim to digest all these particulars, under this second head: thus comprising and compressing the same, without giving any further divisions. May the Lord be with me in explaining the whole: even so, O Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. I am

1. To set this declaration and assertion of the apostle before you; which is this: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.*

In this plural term, the apostle comprehendeth both himself and *saints*, as *saints*: and declares he, and they, knew this to be a truth which could not by any means be controverted. All the people of God, as truly as himself, knew this: and would be most free and also one and the same, in the right acknowledgment of this—That, *whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* Much depends here, on the expressions used. He had just before spoken of a brother in Christ, who seeth his brother *sin a sin which is not unto death.* He had spoken of him, as one who was to be prayed for. He had spoken of a *sin unto death*, for which no prayer was to be offered for the forgiveness of the same. Sin is one thing: and the expression *sinneth* is another. And he having been before speaking of the sin unto death, what can be more just and proper, than to apply the same, to that sin. Especially as the apostle asserts for himself,



and others also, saying, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* He does not say, the new-born doth not commit sin. He acknowledgeth this, and speaks to them concerning their Advocate, saying, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," &c. chap. ii. 1. I conceive, as all sin is in the saints, as it respects their old-Adam nature by the fall, so all sort of sin breaks forth in them, take the whole election of grace, in the various individuals of them, either before they are regenerated, or afterwards. Yea, one of great understanding in the word of God, and in the comprehension of Truth, hath said, he knows of no promise in the Bible, which secures the saints from the possibility of falling into any sin, except, and exclusive of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is the sin unto death, which the apostle hath been mentioning in the context; and for such, any one who had committed it, no prayer was to be offered. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* This is a comfortable truth, if it could be established. You will say, the apostle also declares, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar.* And here he says, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* Does he not lay the whole stress of this upon the new-birth, and is not this the whole amount of it—That there is no sin in our new nature. And it is impossible there should be: therefore as it cannot sin, is not this that which the apostle means when he saith in the words before us, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* May not this be thus applied? I reply, this cannot be the full explanation of this assertion; yet it is a truth that the new-born, have a new nature, or spiritual birth, in the which there is no sin: nor will there be. No; let whatsoever may befall such; even when they fall, it is by means of their old fallen nature. The new nature sinneth not. The old nature is all sin. There is nothing but sin in it; yet this is not the subject which the apostle is here upon. But it is of such as are born again that he speaks: of them he affirms, both in his own name, and with the united suffrage of all saints, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.*

It may not be amiss, to explain the words before us, by other sentences in this same Epistle, which are expressed similar to these. In the 3rd chapter of this Epistle we read the following words. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." v. 5, 6. Again, verse 8, we read, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Again, verse 9, we have the apostle declaring, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Let us connect all these with the words before us, as they are thus expressed: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* I would ask, are not all these cited verses, very suited to each other? Do they not in looking at them, seem to bear the same meaning? If so, I would then ask, how are we to understand their true meaning, seeing the apostle before had affirmed we were not without sin? Yea, if the greatest believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, such as had the most exalted communion with the Father and the Son, even if we the apostles of the Lord and Saviour say, "we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He goes further. "If we say that we have not sinned,

we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." chap. i. 8, 10. In the next chapter he says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate." In the two foregoing verses to our very present text, he says, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." Then he adds, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* I therefore ask, how are all these to be reconciled? so as that we neither contradict the apostle; nor make him contradict himself: nor by any misinterpretation of these passages wound any of the Lord's people, by insisting on it, that if they sin, and thereby their case is a sinful case, any of these passages stand out against them? I reply, it appears to me, that the word *committeth*, a word which is used to express the devil's continuation in sin, might serve as a key to open all those cited scriptures, and our text also: which if it doth, then the apostle hath his eye in all these passages, upon the sin against the Holy Ghost. I ground my own apprehension of this, on these words; "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." chap. iii. 8. Now such as sin against the Holy Ghost, are in the very same state with the devil, as it respects their hatred and enmity to Christ. They hate him with an invincible hatred. His Person as the Son of God; His manifestation in the flesh; His Messiahship and Saviourship; His power and Godhead; such most heartily despise: and their sin is unpardonable. The elect of God are so kept, as that they cannot thus sin. All other sins they may. It is impossible to read of the various acts of sinning mentioned of the elect in the scriptures of Truth, as chargeable on them, either in their state of unregeneracy, or after they were translated out of the same, and not acknowledge this. I mean, that as the whole body of the elect, in their various individuals, are the subjects in whom sin is, so there are all sorts of sin into the which they actually fall, either whilst in the state of nature, or in the state of grace: except decidedly, the sin against the Holy Ghost, which the apostle distinguisheth from all others, by entitling it, *the sin unto death.* Beloved, I do most sincerely beg your attention here. I do not mean that every one of the elect, whilst in their state of sin, falls into the commission of every sin. No; this is not the truth; but one is left to this sin, and another to another: so that there is no sin, as it respects the act of it, but the elect of God, have, either before or after conversion, left to themselves, committed. What may most truly be styled constitutional sin, and which all the holy brethren individually for themselves have, this according to the temperature of their bodies, and the frame of their minds, will break forth again and again, to their extreme grief and mortification. It will be even so, with the most holy saint that will ever be found in the church of Christ militant here upon earth. So that when the apostle saith, *He that committeth sin is of the devil*, he most certainly must mean those who sin *the devil's sin*; in renouncing and rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ altogether: who can be *that murderer*, of whom the apostle says, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*, but one of those persons who had committed the unpardonable sin? Surely the want of that due respect and affection from one brother in Christ to another, cannot amount to so high a charge. If it be asked,

why is such an one styled a brother, and said to hate his brother? I answer, because he professed the same faith, until he became an apostate: upon which he hated him who continued in the faith of Christ, and upon that very account: for the which cause of so hating he is styled a murderer. But it may be you ask, If the elect of God cannot commit the sin unto death, why doth the apostle speak of it, saying, *whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* Why does he write so? His reason, beloved, for so doing was this—The sin against the Holy Ghost, was frequently committed in the apostle's day: it could not be committed but by those who had made, or still continued to make some profession of Christ: it consisted in the final issue of it, in a total apostacy; and in a renunciation of Christ altogether. So that such, before it came to this, and whilst it was only breaking out by little and little, might be so far known from real saints; hence by way of distinction it is, the apostle saith, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.* And I ask you, brethren, and before I proceed any further, what think ye of such an interpretation of this subject, and of thus aiming to cast light upon those scriptures which have been cited? There is nothing forced out of its place: the connection speaks for itself: as thus conceived of, the apostle is perfectly consistent with himself; there is no jar: it is all equal and alike. I would also ask you, if what the apostle says in the words of our text, as well as those quoted, can be understood, and rightly explained any other way? *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* Surely this is the very close and explanation of the whole; and it reflects great light on those passages which have been quoted from the 3rd chapter. As what the apostle has said in the words of our text contains in it immutable truth, and as I conceive I have said all which is necessary, and which may be considered as absolutely belonging to this first head of discourse on the words before me; so I therefore proceed to my next. In which

2. I propose and will endeavour to explain, what the apostle expresses concerning *one born of God*; and his description of such an one in these words—*But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* I am to explain also, how the person born of God *keepeth himself*: as also, from whom he *keepeth himself*: and who *that wicked one* is, from whom he *keepeth himself*: likewise, how he is hereby preserved, so as *that wicked one toucheth him not.* All this I am now to set before you; so far as the Lord shall enable me: as also in what sense we are to understand, that the wicked one toucheth him not. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* To give the explanation of one that is *born of God*; and that, so as to convey the sense and meaning of the apostle in these words, *he that is begotten of God*: it will afterwards follow—the account which he

gives of him. But we will open the sense and meaning, which the apostle's words convey concerning him that is *born of God*.

To be born of God, implies a spiritual and supernatural birth, produced sooner or later, in all the children of God. And God himself is the sole Author of this: therefore such and such as are the subjects of regeneration are said to be born of God. As all the acts of grace towards, within and upon the elect, are common to each of the Divine Persons, so they are predicated of, and applied to each of them; yet they are sometimes more particularly applied to one, and sometimes to another. This is to shew the entire concurrence of each of the co-equal and co-eternal Persons in the Unity of the One incomprehensible Essence in every act of theirs in grace, mercy, love, and salvation towards the elect. To be born of God is to be renewed in our minds—to have life spiritual and eternal in our souls: and we having a new spiritual birth, are translated out of the state of sin, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. This being the case, it follows that this new-birth being evidenced in and by our believing on the Son of God, it may be truly said of such a person, or collectively of such persons, he, they, are begotten of God; as it here is. The words of the apostle are an affirmation of the truth—*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself*. It most assuredly follows, that the new-born may be known—that they by fellow-saints are known: they were so to the apostle, and to the saints in that day: yea, they were so known, as what they were kept from, as that of the unpardonable sin, and how they were kept from the same, was a clear case to the apostle, and also with those whom he includes in the term *We*. And the whole emphasis of their being kept, is laid upon their being born of God, and on their being begotten of God. Read these words, and let me again recite them, and say you if it be not so: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself*. The new-born are preserved from total and final apostacy. They cannot commit the sin against the Holy Ghost—The sin unto death—The sin which is not to be pardoned: for the which there is no forgiveness. This hath been so freely and fully spoken of, under the former particular, that most assuredly there can be no necessity to repeat it here. Therefore as he that is born of God, is hereby manifested to be the child of God, and cannot but delight in God, and walk before him unto all well-pleasing; so he that is begotten of God, by his word, and by his Spirit, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—this is the account the apostle gives of him in the words before us; *he keepeth himself*.

Now I conceive, we should consider what is implied in the expression, *he keepeth himself*: as it first sounds forth as if the man, by virtue of his new-birth, was all-sufficient to keep himself from evil. This cannot be the case, it being declared in the holy word as the prerogative of God, and not of us, to keep ourselves from evil. It is the Lord is the keeper of his people: therefore it is declared, "The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." Ps. cxxi. 7. "He will keep the feet of his saints." 1 Sam. ii. 9. Here are absolute declarations; not confined to the will of the creature, but expressive of the will of God towards his people in Christ Jesus. Now if it be enquired into, what is

contained in this expression in my text concerning the new-born, that, *he keepeth himself*; this most certainly must be connected with the former verses; and if so, must imply his keeping himself from the doctrine of antichrists, the false prophets, and their adherents; so as neither to give heed to them nor their pernicious ways. Surely this may be considered as that which is here referred unto by the apostle in this expression, *he keepeth himself*. This *keeping himself*, I therefore should understand, of giving up all connection with those who denied that Christ Jesus was the true and only Messiah, that He was the Christ of God, the Son of God, that He was in the Divine Nature, God over all blessed for ever. Amen. Now the person born of God would not then, neither will such an one now, have fellowship with such unfruitful workers of darkness, nor will such have fellowship with them either in their anti-scriptural doctrines, lest they should thereby deny their Lord, and thereby dishonour him, who hath saved them with an everlasting Salvation in his own Person, and by his most precious blood and righteousness.

This leads me to express further, what the person, of whom the apostle here speaks, keeps himself from—he keepeth himself, from *that wicked one*. It shall be shewed how he keepeth himself from him; as also how he is hereby preserved, so as that wicked one toucheth him not: and in what sense we are to understand that that wicked one toucheth him not. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*. The keeping from such as corrupt the doctrine of Christ and worship of Christ, is what the person born again is very careful to do: in the apostle's view, it was the case. Hereby the saint, *John* is here speaking of, kept himself from *the wicked one*, who is here expressed by the term *that wicked one*; even the devil, who is before in this Epistle called *the wicked one*, ch. ii. 14. And in ch. iii. 12, he is there styled, *that wicked one*. And *Cain* who slew *Abel* his brother, is said to be of him: for which reason I attribute what is said concerning him that hateth his brother—that he is a murderer; to such, as notwithstanding their profession, sinned the sin unto death. In the words before us, the apostle speaks of this enemy under one of the former titles—*that wicked one*. Now as it is affirmed how he that is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, so here the question is, how he keepeth himself from *this wicked one the devil*. I conceive this must be so confined to the subject before us, as to be considered as it particularly concerns falling by any of his false suggestions and cursed insinuations, to commit the sin unto death: and so I understand what follows, *and that wicked one toucheth him not*: that is, that the devil cannot by all his wiles prevail.—So as ever to overcome the person born of God, and begotten of God, to become an apostate—To renounce Christ, and the gospel. In these particulars the believer in Jesus is invincible: the wicked one can never touch him here. His perseverance in the true knowledge, faith, profession, and confession of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, of the Person of Christ, of His true and proper Godhead, of the Person, co-equality, and Essential Divinity of the Holy Ghost, as One with the Father and the Son, in the incomprehensible Essence, these are such fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel, as are neither given up, nor dropped at any time, no, nor on any occasion,

by such as *are born of God, and begotten of God*. It is by the continual abiding of these eternal verities in the mind, and the continual walking in the true knowledge, confession, and belief of them, that *he that is born of God, and begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*. He being thus defended by his knowledge and belief of the Truth, it is out of the power of that wicked one to touch him, so as to draw him into his snare, so as for him to sin the sin unto death.

My beloved, I have done my best in opening the subject contained in the verse before us. You have heard me often in going through these lectures, express the necessity of considering the times, state of the church, and sins, heresies, and apostacy which were the character of that closing day of the apostolical ministry. Therefore you should bear this in mind, when I am on the sin against the Holy Ghost, that this is what the apostle in several places in this Epistle, and also in the words before us, which we have been aiming rightly to understand, affirms, saints, all the new-born keep themselves from; and in which the wicked one is so withstood, as that he toucheth them not: he therefore cannot in this overcome; neither can they as born of God, and begotten of God fall thereby. And now I leave what hath been declared on this subject to your consideration, and for your judgment to be exercised on the same. May the Lord the Spirit give you His own light, mind and will, on this, and every part of His sacred word of Truth, as seemeth Him good. It is with his Majesty to give light and understanding. May it please Him to give this to you, to me, to all his ministers, churches, and people: then the minds of all his saints will be more and more enlarged in the true knowledge of what is contained in the Holy Scriptures. The Lord grant it may be so. Amen.

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## SERMON XCI.

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*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.—I JOHN v. 19.*

As the whole of this Epistle was designed to settle the minds of saints, in true and right apprehensions of Christ, of their state and interest in Him, and to bring them to an exercise of their faith and confidence in Him; so the apostle again and again, uses the term *we*, including himself and all the apostles and saints in this same expression, which he might well do, seeing they were equally and alike instated in the same Jesus, in the same salvation, and in all the blessings and benefits thereof. I apprehend the beginning of the context, with which our text stands united, is at verse 14: and in and throughout the same, we have these words *we* and *us* very frequently, over and over again. That you may have the clear

evidence of it, I will recite the whole thereof to the words before us. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* As the new-birth, the being *born of God*, and *begotten of God*, is security from the unpardonable sin, so as that such as are born again cannot commit it, so the saints in whose name, as well as in his own, the apostle is here speaking, knew that they were of God; which implies, they had the inward testimony of the same, or they could not have spoken, or been so confident of it. It was therefore that their lives and conversations differed from all others: and this being the cause, the fruits and effects could not but follow. Hence it was known by all the community of saints, that *whosoever is born of God sinneth not, the sin unto death.* Such an one keepeth himself, out of the way, and paths of error: he gives no ear to false doctrine; nor to the devil: he resists him: this is one means whereby he overcomes him. The new-born hold fast the faithful word; by taking hold of Christ as their shield to guard and defend themselves against all the fiery darts of the wicked; they draw forth also the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; these are the weapons of their warfare: in the true and proper use of the same, the new-born keepeth himself, so as that he cannot fall into the sin unto death, and that wicked one toucheth him not. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Here are two solemn, and immutable truths contained in these words: the one respects the saints: the other, the whole world. I will aim to open and set forth the truths contained in them, under the following particulars.

1. What the apostle here asserts of himself, and all the new-born, which is this: *They knew they were of God:* under this head, shall be expressed how they knew this: as also the blessed fruits and effects of this in their own souls. The new-born are made partakers of the divine nature: how this is to be understood shall be explained. The new creation, or new creature hath its spiritual faculties and senses: such as *seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, and tasting.* How these are exercised shall also be set before you: it is in the exercise of these on the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation, as also on the love of our heavenly Father in Him, that we have an outgoing of heart, and real communion with the Father and the Son, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. I will aim to speak to each of these particulars, under this first general head, and I conceive this will be to go through the whole summary of the same; as contained in these words, *And we know that we are of God.*

2. I will consider what is expressed concerning the world out of Christ: *And the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Here the extensiveness of the expression shall be noticed: it is not a part of the world; or, some individuals in it: no; the words are, *the whole world lieth in*

wickedness. Some read it thus, *the whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one. The wicked one is the devil.* The whole world are in his arms: they are fast inclosed in the same: yea, they think themselves very secure. This most tremendous state and case shall be touched on: and that will be all, as I am not fond of preaching hell and damnation. Having given you the outline of those subjects I intend to bring forward, I now set about executing my plan. May the Lord himself be with me of a truth. I am

1. To observe and set out before you, what the apostle here asserts, of himself, and for all the new-born; which is this: *And we know that we are of God.* They knew the same also; for that is included in the plural expressions made use of in the words before us. It is a positive expressed: it was uttered by one, whose knowledge of the truths of God and the state and case of saints was true, he being so filled with the Holy Ghost, with divine knowledge, gifts, and graces, as that with respect to him, as an apostle, he was infallible, in what he wrote unto the church, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost: *And we know that we are of God.*

As this assertion was true, I would ask, How was this known? On what foundation does the truth of this stand? How did the apostle know this? I answer, It could only be known, even by these persons, from the word, and by the Spirit of God: who by witnessing to their spirits that they were the sons of God, and by sealing home on their minds the truth of the same, and they receiving His testimony of Jesus, and of the Father's love to them in Him, and the Holy Spirit shedding abroad a sense of the same in their hearts; it must be hereby, the saints knew they were the Lord's. And as the apostle had heard and known, from their own account and that of others, how Christ had been revealed from the word and Spirit unto them, and was formed in them, and of their confession and profession of Him, and his salvation; that all this was altogether suited with the word of grace, and that their experience of the same in and within their own minds was so exactly correspondent with all this, as the wax is to the seal, this must have been his ground for this assertion. He could know nothing hereof any other way; unless we conceive it might be wholly by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. That he and they knew they were of God, that they were born of God, and begotten again of God, was so clearly understood both by him, and them, that he says without any *if* or *and* in the same, *we know that we are of God.* Surely this knowledge must have produced in their souls, the most blessed fruits and effects. Their knowing Christ, was to them life everlasting: if they had not been born again, they could not have received the true knowledge of Him. If they had not been blessed with the supernatural knowledge of Him, they could not have had everlasting life in their souls, neither could they have believed on Him, for life everlasting; nor could they have had soul delight and satisfaction in Him; neither could they have had any inward communion with Him. It was what they knew of Christ made him precious to them. It was this led them most highly to prize and esteem Him. These effects were hereby produced in them: they loved Him: they were happy in Him: they had communion with Him: He was their All.

This leads me on still further into the subject—To observe, that as the apostle says of himself, and those whom he is here addressing, *And we know that we are of God,* which includes the former verse, in the



which he had said, *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*, that such as are born of God, are *partakers of the divine nature*: which is a most exalted expression: it is expressive of the new-birth: this is in us: it is not in Christ for us: it is produced by the Spirit of the living God within us; so as that our souls are the subjects hereof: not by nature, but wholly by grace. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. To understand aright from the scriptures of Truth, concerning our being partakers of *the divine nature*, which expression is only made use of by *Peter*; we are to know, that we have in the act of the Holy Ghost, in regeneration, a nature wrought in our souls, which is altogether holy, spiritual, and divine: it is suited to all in God, or that we shall ever know and enjoy of Him in all his Persons and perfections, of his love, grace and mercy, of his blessedness and glory, either in earth or heaven. It is so suited to conceive aright of God, and of all which we shall ever be admitted to know of Him, in a way of real communion with Him, and of real communications from Him, that it is upon that very account styled *the divine nature*. It is not that we are made partakers of Godhead, or of the Divine Nature, or Essence. No; this cannot be; but we are made partakers of a divine, holy, supernatural nature, or new-birth; which holy nature will always escape the corruption in the world: it being impossible, it should be tainted through the lust of the flesh, or the vile suggestions of the wicked one. *For the wicked one toucheth it not, neither can it sin, because it is born of God*—In the new nature received in regeneration, we have the very same principles of spiritual life and holiness, which are in our Lord Jesus Christ, our Head: it flows from his fulness: and of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. He is the inexhaustible fountain. Nothing can be added to Him, as God-Man, Mediator, Head, Saviour, and our Father and Friend. We receive our all from Him: are one in Him, and with Him: and all we need to nourish up our souls unto everlasting life is in Him. We are dependent on Him, moment by moment for every supply of grace and strength, to nourish up the inward man unto life eternal.

The new creature, by which *Paul* expresses the new-birth, or those who are new-born, hath spiritual faculties; by the which Christ is apprehended, enjoyed—His Person is seen—His salvation is embraced—His love is enjoyed—His mercy esteemed. The senses of the new-born, are divinely quickened and animated, and also drawn forth into act and exercise, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost, on the new nature implanted in the regenerate: and it is hereby, that we have real and actual communion with Christ, and with the Father in Him. We taste his love: we say of it, *Thy love is better than wine*: yea, *Thy lovingkindness is better than life*, is the very language of our minds. We see Christ in the glass of the gospel, through faith receive Him into our minds, and say of Him, that *He is altogether lovely*. We feel spiritual satiety in Christ. Saints renewed in the spirit of their minds, feel a divine satisfaction and satiety in Christ, and in their salvation in Him: and in the

spiritual apprehensions of their state in Him, and also in the blessings and blessedness which they have in Him. They smell an odour and fragrancy in the Name, Person, in the righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession, yea, in the word and promises of Christ; which causes them to say of Him, that *his name is as ointment poured forth*. They have ears to hear his blessed voice, saying unto them, *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*. Now as the new-birth is within us, so the faculties of it, and senses also, are inherent in the same: they are abiding in it: they cannot be separated from it: they will therefore remain in the regenerated mind all through life. They will not cease in the article of death: they will constitute the spiritual mind in heaven throughout the ages of eternity. Now the work and act of the Holy Ghost, in the saints, in regeneration, is one eternal act: the soul begotten of God, will have communications from God: all which will be out of the fulness of Christ: this will be evidenced to saints, by the gracious influences and testimony of the Holy and blessed Spirit, who dwells in the saints, and seals them up unto the day of eternal redemption. There are who deny the inherency of all these spiritual faculties in the soul. It is allowed by some, that the Holy Ghost works in the soul, and makes known Christ; yet say they, there is nothing wrought in the mind. If it be so, it may be asked, On what doth the Holy Ghost work, if so be there are no spiritual principles in the mind, on which he is most graciously pleased to operate? Whilst the Holy Ghost dwells in every one born again, yet he hath produced in such all the seeds of spiritual life, the abiding principles of grace and holiness in the new creature which he produces in regeneration, so that the person new-born, hath the same divine and holy principles that are in Christ Jesus, and therefore the same mind is in him, which was also in Christ Jesus; and the apostle saith, "we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. ii. 16: and "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." 1 Cor. vi. 17. It is this new creation, produced in regeneration, which the Holy Ghost works upon. He draws forth what he hath implanted. He makes the same manifest by influencing the believer to trust in Christ—To put on Christ—To walk in communion with Him—To walk before Him; and thus going on perfecting holiness in the fear of God. These are my views of the subject; and these do appear to me truly scriptural. Now *we know that we are of God*, because we so truly take in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the everlasting love of the Father to us in his dear Son, through the light and testimony of the Holy Ghost, into our minds, through the medium of these spiritual faculties, and actually enjoy the same by the exercise of our spiritual senses, and have hereby real communion with the Three in Jehovah. *And we know that we are of God*: so says the apostle. There is the full assurance of it given us, in the revelation which God hath made to our minds, of his Son Jesus Christ, in the everlasting Gospel; and which the Holy Ghost hath realized in our minds, so that Christ is formed in us. The Father having hereby revealed his Son in us. Christ is our Head, Mediator, and Salvation. He is all this in his own Person. He is all this by the Divine constitution and appointment of the Father. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. All this Christ is unto us. He is made all this to our persons, by the Father. The Holy Ghost bears

his testimony to the truth of this, in the scripture which hath been quoted. In and by means of regeneration, and spiritual life communicated unto us thereby, we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand this. Hereby we are led, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, to receive these truths into our minds, to believe them in our hearts: and in these exercises we have a real knowledge of the Person of Christ—Of the love of Christ—Of the salvation of Christ—Of our personal interest in Christ: and that all this is the gift and fruit of God's everlasting love, and the good pleasure of his will towards us, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And the Holy Ghost keeping up, and maintaining these supernatural subjects in our renewed mind, it is hereby that we go on, and continue in believing in Christ, for our whole salvation. And our faith being most exactly suited to apprehend Christ, and Christ being so most exactly suited to it, as the eye is to the object, and the object to the eye, it is hereby Christ is in us. He dwells in us. He is our meat; our drink; our holiness; our righteousness; our purity; our salvation; our strength; our portion; our treasure; our inheritance; our heaven; our All. He is now all this to us apprehensively. He is all this now to us manifestatively and influentially. He is all this now unto us communicatively. So as that hereby he dwells in us, and makes his abode in us. He was all this to us from everlasting, by the immutable good pleasure of the Father's will. He was all this to us, in his own Person, incarnation and finished work. He and it were placed to our account; we were his, and He was ours before the world began. He was manifested in the flesh, and bore our sins, and carried our sorrows long before we were in this world: yet, as there was a period fixed on in the counsel and covenant of Peace, when He was to be made sin, and a curse; so there is a fixation in the Divine will, when all this is made and shall be made known to each and every individual of the elect; which are the seed of Christ, the travail of his soul.

Whilst it must have been very satisfactory to the persons who believed on the name of the Son of God, to whom the apostle wrote, for him to say, including himself with them, *And we know that we are of God*, I cannot but consider this as spoken by way of discrimination, as separating these from those of the antichristian party. We may conclude from hence, it was the apostle's delight, to confirm the saints in their most holy faith. I might here quote these words of his to prove this: he says, verse 13th.—“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” This Jesus the Son of God, hath saved us: we have this confidence concerning Him, that He will hear our prayers—That he will answer our petitions: and that on our own behalf, and also for others: *And we know that we are of God*: and this is our consolation: we have been kept from the false christs, and the false prophets, and from those who openly deny the Essential Godhead of our Lord, which may be full evidence to you, as well as unto me, saith the apostle, that we are of God, seeing he hath kept us from renouncing his Truth, or rejecting any part of the same. Beloved, we may receive this instruction also from these words before us, *And we know that we are of God*, by an abidance in the true doctrine of Christ. This is no inconsiderable evidence that we are right with God. The present day and times, are very awful: the truths of the everlasting

gospel are but poorly treated. It is somehow or other, the state of the churches, to be very cool and indifferent about the essential Truths. I lament it: yet if I say to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, Lord God, cease I beseech thee, from suspending the out-pouring of thy Holy Spirit: Alas! *By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small*; I confess I perceive no answer from God. What the Lord expresseth in these words, seems to be descriptive of our present times, and that as it respects the outward visible church of Christ with us and amongst us—"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." Hos. viii. 12. The discontents evidenced from one professor to another; the various divisions and dissensions in churches, the natural religion to the neglect of that which is altogether supernatural, which is so constantly preached, and which almost universally prevails at this very time throughout the whole British United Kingdom and empire, lead me to think on these words, "Woe also to them when I depart from them!" Hos. ix. 12. They seem to me as expressive of and very applicable to a church state: which may cease, and be discontinued; and this on account of the formality, corruption of doctrine and worship by those who are the members of the same. To be kept therefore in the Truth is a great blessing: it being an outward evidence *we are of God*. It must have been very satisfactory to the saints, to whom the apostle is here writing, for him to set his apostolical seal to this truth, *and we know that we are of God!* But how far above and beyond this, must it be, for the Holy Ghost to set His own seal on our hearts, confirming us, in our knowledge that *we are of God!* We are informed by the apostle *Paul* that the foundation of God standeth sure. It is neither who loves the Truth, or who rejects it, can either strengthen, or weaken the foundation: "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker," or *gangrene*: "of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." What then? let it be so, who is going to be injured by all this? Not the saints, and children of God. No; it is outward carnal professors, who never knew the Truth as it is in Jesus. The apostle therefore adds, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. ii. 16—19. The foundation here, is God's act of eternal election: this is sure: the persons chosen, were in Christ before the foundation of the world. Christ stood responsible for all their sins; He became their Surety; and on the footing of the same became incarnate in the fulness of time, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: the Holy Ghost effectually calls, and brings each of them, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It pleases the Holy Ghost, when he is pleased to give them full assurance of their being the Lord's, to set on the broad seal of heaven to assure them that they are the Lord's: which seal hath this inscription on it—*The Lord knoweth them that are his*: which being set on upon the regenerated mind, leaves this impression—*The Lord knoweth thee to be His*. It is hereby we have indubitable certainty, that you, I, and each believer, individually, know that we are the Lord's. This is our being sealed unto the day of redemption: that is, from the grave of death: when the body being raised, *the Saviour*,

*the Lord Jesus Christ, shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* Phil. iii. 20, 21. I will now enter on my next particular: in the which

2. It was proposed to consider, what is expressed concerning *the world out of Christ*: which is this—*And the whole world lieth in wickedness.* The extensiveness of the expression shall be considered: it is not a part of the world; or, some individuals in it: no; the words are, *the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Some read it thus, *the whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one. The wicked one, is the devil.* The whole world are in his arms: they are inclosed in the same: yet they think themselves very secure. This most tremendous state, and case, shall be touched on: and that will be all, as I am not fond of preaching hell, and damnation. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

I would observe, *the world out of Christ*, is the whole of *Adam's* posterity, who were not in Christ before the foundation of the world: or, in other words, all, and every individual of *Adam's* descendants, "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii. 8. The elect were chosen in Christ, in the pure mass of creatureship, in a Head, for the enjoyment of God in a state of everlasting glory, and this from before the foundation of the world. The rest of the creation were left in their pure creation state: with a sufficiency of power to abide in it. One observes, "God, by passing by these, did not lay them under a necessity of being damned by forcing them to sin; nor did he infuse into them vicious principles, to make them sin, and fall." I will go on to quote more from this worthy. "It was the will of God, to give his law, as the rule of the creature's obedience, and place innocent *Adam* under it, as a public head, and representative of all mankind. As such he stood, as such he fell. Now the fall of man, or of *Adam*, so far concerns all his posterity that it renders them guilty, but yet God doth not until they are personally filthy. There is, therefore, no room left for them to say, what, must we go to hell for another's sin? No, no. They have sin enough in themselves to sink them deep into the gulph of misery. Let us on the other hand consider the *Sublapsarian* scheme, which teaches, that God passeth by none but such as he looks upon as sinners. He beholds their *sin* in all its aggravating circumstances, and from this consideration he assigns them over to everlasting destruction, whilst he is pleased to shew grace and pity to some whom he designs to be monuments of his favour and compassion. This is the *Sublapsarian* scheme of election and reprobation. It asserts reprobation, or a passing by the creature as impotent, when it was in a state of incapacity, and could not help itself; whereas, to be cast off, in such a helpless and impotent condition, must inevitably prove the everlasting destruction of all those whom God hath thus passed by. From whence it follows, that all those who hold the doctrine of election and reprobation, as under the fall, do absolutely assert a pre-ordination of those who are passed by to damnation. According to the scheme, the elect themselves must be considered, as sinful, in God's election, for that they were elected in Christ, is evident, and will be agreed by all who hold the doctrine of election, and consequently Christ the Head, who was Purity itself, had an impure body, in God's election.

Give me leave to say, that the Sublapsarian scheme strikes at the Divine Independency, since it leads the great God out of himself into a sink of sin and misery, to fetch reasons of his dealings towards the children of men : and also to make all the Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel to stand upon a false and rotten bottom. If election is founded upon the fall, and all the other doctrines of the Gospel are founded thereon, and are the consequences of election, then the whole scheme of grace and salvation is founded upon the fall ; which sufficiently proves, that Grace and Glory stand upon a rotten foundation, since the fall of man, and not the Lord Jesus Christ, is the foundation of the elect's grace and glory." As I never met with anything so concise upon these subjects, I could not but quote it ; as I think it casts great light both on the *Supralapsarian*, and *Sublapsarian* schemes.

I now go on with shewing how *the whole world*, out of Christ, *lieth in wickedness*. This being set in opposition to the former assertion, *And we know that we are of God*, shews that those who are not of God, are out of Christ : therefore it must include and involve the whole bulk of them ; consequently it follows it must be these of whom the apostle is speaking, when he here says, *And the whole world lieth in wickedness*. This is a very extensive expression : it reaches to all men ; to all persons and conditions of men : no circumstances and cases they may possibly be in, alter the truth of the apostle's assertion concerning them. They may be professors of Christ : they may be natural religious persons : they may be moral : they may be immoral : they may be profane : they may be full of all uncleanness ; yet, they being in their fallen state, and left to their own free will, none of these are in Christ : they do not belong unto Him : they are entitled *the world*. And to express how far the assertion extends itself, it is *the whole world*. But here a question may be asked ; Are all the individuals of the human race, equally guilty, polluted, and sinful ? Are they all and each of them equally guilty of the same crimes ? The reply to the first of these questions is as follows : as fallen in *Adam* their head of nature, and as considered in him as their fallen head, they are all equal and alike : not one more polluted, guilty, and unclean, than the other. This is the testimony of the Lord God in the scriptures concerning them—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men," *in whom*, or, "for that all have sinned." Rom. iii. 23 ; ch. v. 12. As to the second question ; they are not all of them equally guilty of the same crimes. The greatest evil in sin lies in its taking off the heart of the sinner entirely from God. Whilst it was by the first man's actual transgression, he ruined the whole human race, and it is upon the footing of our creation-union in him, we as represented by him as our federal head, are in our natures corrupted and defiled ; we being in him when he fell ; so the devil, he it was, who by the subtilty which he made use of by means of the serpent, deceived our first parents, and all their posterity : and whilst the contagion hath polluted all flesh, and all sinners have alike the same disposition to sin, yet they are not all alike disposed to one and the same way of sinning. It is this which distinguishes one of the sinners of mankind from another. And as it respects outward acts of sin, one may be said to commit more sins than another ; yet all the world out of Christ, be they religious or irreligious, be they decent, or profane, their state is one

and the same. They are in their sins: they are under the guilt and power of sin: they are in a sinful state: they are in the arms of the wicked one. *The whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one.* He surrounds them: he embraces them: he seeks out pleasures for them: he so accommodates them, that there is not one sinful desire in their minds, but he finds out that which will most exactly suit them: he proposes it, and works secretly and with energy on their sinful wills and corrupt passions to fall in with the same: then he lulls them in his arms: he embraces them, and casts their minds into such a state of insensibility, that they fall fast asleep in his embrace; so that it may be said, they are in his arms, and lie in him, without the least apprehension of the danger they are in of hell, and eternal damnation. This is the case of every individual out of Christ. *The whole world lieth in wickedness.* It must be so, for there is more wickedness committed by sinners in this world, than can possibly be committed by the damned in hell. The words of our text, are by some read thus; *the whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one*: this is most awful and striking! Could they be in a worse case in hell? I really think not. The wicked one is the devil. He is the wicked one indeed; who hath so corrupted his mind by sinning, as that he is the very essence of sin: no words can describe it. He is the implacable enemy of God and man. He hates Christ with an invincible hatred. Hence he will even contrive so to corrupt the minds of such as are hearers of the gospel, and those who are of a religious turn, as to find out something which he will palm on them, as the very gospel, and by which he will most awfully deceive them. I would touch a little on this most tremendous case and state, which the apostle expresseth in these words, *and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Surely this case and state must be beyond our utmost conception. To be without God in the world; to be walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air: to have him working with energy within and upon the mind and body also; what, except it be to be in hell, and damned, what can exceed this? If I am to make a reply, I answer, nothing can: *the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Sinners cannot be more completely in the arms of the wicked one, than they are. And he, as *the strong man armed*, hath all sorts of weapons wherewith he keeps the world in his arms so secure, as that they cannot stir one inch from him: neither can they, by any power of their own, if they were so disposed, get out of his dominion and influence over them. What will be the final issue of this? eternal death. And what will this consist in? the destruction of the well-being of every faculty, sense, and member of body and soul. Hell, eternal death and damnation will follow, upon Christ's pronouncing the following sentence, and the devil and his angels will be involved in the same, and included in it—*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* This most tremendous sentence will be uttered on the whole world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one; upon him, and his angels also. May we be led to look to Jesus. Amen.

## SERMON XCII.

*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.—1 JOHN V. 20.*

THESE words are vastly comprehensive: they contain the substance of this whole Epistle: they are pronounced by the apostle, as including in them immutable Truth: as he himself, and those *who believed on the name of the Son of God*, had the fullest and most satisfactory evidence of the same. And in them is a full confutation of the heresy and error of the then present times in which the apostle lived and wrote this Epistle; which consisted, in a renunciation of the Person, Godhead, and Messiahship of our Lord Jesus Christ. These truths by the antichrists in that day, were openly and most blasphemously denied: these words therefore, are a full confutation of these errors and heresies. It is in these words of the apostle, most fully and gloriously declared, that *the Son of God is come in the flesh*. The apostle, and all such as were born again and begotten of God, had full assurance and evidence of this: they had received this most precious truth, with the mystery and grace contained in the same, into their minds: they had through the witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, the most clear and realizing evidence of the same: hereby they knew they were in Christ, whom they confessed to be *the true God, and eternal life*. This most certainly is the real and very outline of the words before us: *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*. In my opening and setting before you the particular subjects contained in the words before us, I will consider them in the following order.

1. This solemn assertion of the apostle, expressed thus, *And we know that the Son of God is come*. This I shall set forth in the first sense, as peculiar to the apostles: and in a secondary sense, how it may be applicable to us, as saints; who receive all the knowledge of Christ which we have, from their testimony, and know the truth and efficacy of the same in our own souls, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

2. I will shew how others are brought to the knowledge of this most important truth also; even such as had not seen Christ in the flesh: this in the words before us, is thus expressed—*And hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true*. Him that is true: He is *the Son of God; the true Messiah; the Lord Jesus Christ; the Son of the Father, in truth and love*.

3. I will endeavour to express the blessedness of this knowledge; and the effect which accompanies the same, which is this—A real appre-



hension, and confidence, that we are *in Christ*; which is thus expressed, and confessed, *And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* And

4. This most adorable Person is declared to be, *the true God, and eternal life.* These are the subjects which are particularly to be set before you, in the course of this present Sermon: which of itself, if properly executed, will contain a whole body of divinity. The words of the text, without any comment on the same, most assuredly must be allowed to contain the substance, kernel, and marrow of the Gospel. It is a most wonderful closure to this Epistle, which contains a full and free account of the grace bestowed on and blessedness of such, as have fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit; and through his most gracious influences, and anointings, and operations within them, and upon them. May the Lord himself be with me of a truth, and lead me so through each of these particulars as proposed, that His own glorious grace may be magnified thereby, and your minds farther enlightened and edified. I will now enter on my text as follows:

1. To consider this solemn assertion of the apostle, which he thus expresses, *And we know that the Son of God is come.* This I shall set forth as peculiar in the first place to the apostles; and afterwards as it may be applicable to us as saints, who receive all the knowledge of Christ which we have, from their testimony, and know the truth and efficacy of the same in our own souls, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

In the knowledge *that the Son of God is come*, must of necessity be implied, that the Son of God was to come: which will of necessity lead us back to the first promise of Christ immediately upon the fall, which was the open commencement of grace. He was then declared to be the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the old serpent called the devil. He was after this declared to be the Seed of *Abram*, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. After this *Jacob* spake of Him as *the Shiloh* to whom the gathering of the people was to be. He was then prophesied of, as descending from the tribe of *Judah*. He is after this spoken of, as *a Branch* out of the stock of *Jesse*: as *the Son of David*; unto whom God had sworn with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. see Acts ii. 30. The sacred memorials of Christ, together with the prophecies which went before concerning Him, were so many evidences to Old Testament saints, of the incarnation of the Lord and Saviour. The prophet *Isaiah*, as if he had actually lived to see all this realized, broke forth, and said, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” chap. ix. 6. Our apostle lived at the very period of time, when all this was accomplished; when the Son of God became incarnate. He had the honour of seeing Immanuel—God manifest in the flesh—of conversing with Him. He was admitted into His most gracious presence. He, with his brother *James*, and *Peter*, saw Him on the mount of transfiguration. He was with them, an *eye-witness of his Majesty*. He *beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. At which time “Christ received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the

excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Peter i. 17. *John* was a witness of the Personal Glory of Christ. He was fully assured that the majesty and glory which shone forth in Christ, on the holy mount, could be resident in none other but in Him, who was the only begotten Son of God. It was a peculiar privilege and blessing which *John*, together with the rest of the apostles had bestowed on them, to see Christ in the flesh—To behold Him transfigured on the holy mount. This great mystery, *God manifest in the flesh*, was hereby so realized to him, and *James* and *Peter*, who were admitted to this sight, both inwardly to their minds, and outwardly to their corporeal senses, that they were hereby properly qualified, when the Holy Ghost came upon them, as he did on the day of *Pentecost*, to bear their testimony to the Person, Deity, and Messiahship of Christ. The apostle *John* might therefore say, as he doth in the words before us, *And we know that the Son of God is come.*

I conceive in this *we*, we are here to include all the apostles. I would dwell a little on this subject; and this, as it was peculiar unto them. To see Him in our nature, of whom all the prophets spake, from the foundation of the world!—To see Him of whom *Moses* wrote and spake!—To see Him who was the sole and entire glory of all the types, figures, symbols, and sacrifices!—To see Him who was shadowed forth by the Tabernacle first, and the Temple of *Solomon* afterwards!—To see Him in our world who was the antitypical Temple, who shone forth in the Holy of Holies, in vision, to the open view of the prophet *Isaiah*, who said, *mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*—To see Him face to face, in the form and fashion as a man; and at the same time to know Him to be *the Christ, the Son of the living God!* This must have contained in it, inexpressible blessedness. It could not but be, that to *John*, and those whom he includes in the word *we*, it must have been perfectly convincing, that this most wonderful and most adorable Person was *He* who was *the True Messiah, the Son of God.* I would here observe, *John* and his fellow-apostles, had such knowledge and enjoyment of the Person, love, incarnation, righteousness, sacrifice, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as may well be allowed far to exceed all the apprehension of all the saints beside; in some certain sense, and in some certain degree. Yet Christ is as truly received into the mind, of all those who are born of God, and such as are real saints, as really and as truly, as He was into theirs; but not so fully, and to so great a degree. They had an outward knowledge of Christ which we have not; yet we receiving their testimony concerning his Person, life, actions, miracles, and sermons, have real intuitive perceptions, and apprehensions of the same, in our spiritual understandings. So that whilst it might be said by the apostle, including such as were apostles with himself, *we know that the Son of God is come;* it may in a secondary sense be applicable unto us: seeing *we*, as saints, receive all the knowledge of Christ which we have, from their testimony; and know the truth and efficacy of the same, in our own souls, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. *And we know that the Son of God is come.* From whence did he come? I answer, from heaven, from the bosom of the Father. How did he come into our world? By his incarnation. What did he come for? To save his people from their sins. How did he accomplish this? By bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, and making his soul an offering for sin, and sustaining the very curse of God due to their

transgressions. He came, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." see Dan. ix. 24. As the apostle says, *And we know that the Son of God is come*; so I proceed to shew

2. How others are brought to the knowledge of this most important truth also: even such as had not seen Christ in the flesh. This in the words before us, is thus expressed—*And hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.*

In regeneration the Holy Ghost is pleased to give us, *a new understanding*. This is wholly spiritual, and suited to receive the true scriptural knowledge of Christ: and we receiving the knowledge of Christ into our new and spiritual understandings, the Holy Spirit is most graciously pleased to realize the same in us: and this most solemn and positive assertion of the apostle, *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true*, most exactly and admirably well suits the subject in this part of it now before us. And the declaration of the apostle, and our knowledge of the same, are of the utmost importance unto us. The whole Bible rests entirely upon the truth here declared. He who was to come into our world, was the Son of God. It is here declared by the apostle, *that the Son of God is come*. This was one of the most important truths the apostles had to bear testimony unto: in this was contained the full accomplishment of all written in the scriptures, concerning the *Messiah*, and his Saviourship; so that these words, *we know that the Son of God is come*, are the apostle's seal, and solemn attestation, to this great and fundamental truth. Beloved, how you and I are brought to the knowledge and belief of this very same truth, is the present subject before us. It is not in the same way the apostles were: that is, we are not admitted to a corporeal sight of Christ. The incarnation of Christ, the work of Christ, are past. The way they knew Him, and his salvation, differs from the way in which we know Him: especially as it respects the outward circumstances of the same. They had seen Christ in the flesh: we had not. They received their knowledge of Him, in and by their personal converses with Him. The Holy Ghost gave them the true, spiritual, and right apprehensions of Christ, as *he brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them*. Their knowledge of Christ, and their interviews with Christ in the state of his humiliation, were the ground and foundation of their knowledge of the whole mystery of his grace, and salvation. On this the Spirit wrought in their minds, and gave them the inward apprehension of the supernatural glories, worth, work, perfection and salvation of the Lord. Now we are led into the knowledge of the same Christ thus—We have not seen Christ in the flesh as they did. Yet their testimony of what they saw and heard of Him, being recorded by them in their writings, it is by them, as the Holy Spirit is most graciously pleased to give us the true understanding of the same, that we know Christ as truly as they did. We are hereby led to believe on Christ for salvation, as they also did: hereby we are made as real partakers of Christ as they were; and have as true communion with Him, and as real communications from Him as they had; yet not so fully: that it is even so, these words, as I apprehend them, bear witness: *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.*

Here are the words *we* and *us* in the text: if we apply the *we* to the apostles, and the *us* to the saints who lived then; yet certain it is they had not seen, at least for the most part of them, Christ in the flesh: most certain, however, it is, they are here included with the apostles themselves, in the blessedness of knowing Christ. Without this they had not been born again. They could not have believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God. They could not have had communion with Him. If we attend to these words of our Lord, the matter will be very clear and plain: He says to his Divine Father in the 17th chapter of *John*, v. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." The church and household of God are said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. ii. 20. Surely this must imply, that the doctrine of the apostles, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, respecting his Person, Godhead, Messiahship, and Salvation, is the means by which the Holy Ghost brings those which belong to the election of grace, to know and believe on Christ for salvation and all the blessings of life everlasting. It is, then, by the Son of God giving us an understanding, that we receive the true knowledge of Him. And this He hath done: and this must be a new and spiritual one; as the faculty must be suited to the object and subject known. How else shall we either apprehend or receive the object and subject into our minds? It cannot be, except the medium by which we receive the knowledge of the Son of God, is suited thereunto. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* Our knowledge of Christ is in the reality of it, the same with the apostles': it is seated in our understandings: it is here the true knowledge which we have of Christ exists; and the true knowledge of Christ sanctifies the will: it influences our affections: it raises up our minds to a spiritual fixation on Christ Jesus; as the Rock of ages—The Rock of salvation—The Rock of strength—The Rock on which the elect church is built, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Christ is our spiritual and eternal life. We receive life from Him in our regeneration: this life is manifested when we believe on him: every act of spiritual life consists in continued acts of believing. Yet it is not our believing on Christ: no; nor our living a life of faith on the Son of God, and in full assurance that He loved us, and gave Himself for us, nor our having communion with our most precious Lord in all this, is our life in Christ. These are but the effects of life: even of that life which we have in Christ. Yet they are so many most glorious effects produced in us and by us, by Christ's indwelling in us. This is most blessedly expressed by the apostle *Paul* in these words, "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. It is the knowledge of God and his Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. We have the true apprehension of this here in our present state; and shall be taken to heaven, that there we may be more perfected in this knowledge. I conceive our knowledge of Christ in glory, will be to us above all our enjoyments there: as all our communion with Christ in glory, will flow into our souls through our knowledge of Him. So that it is hereby, and herefrom we shall in our every faculty of understanding, will, memory, and affections, be filled with all the fulness of God. But to return to our text, *And*

*hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* Who is this? *The Son of God. The true Messiah. The Lord Jesus Christ.* He is *the Son of the Father, in truth and love.* This most undoubtedly is thus expressed, in direct contradiction to the false professors, and profession, to the false doctrine, and antichrists of that day—to the false prophets, and their doctrines also. Let us review the whole of the former part of our text, and see if it be not a reasonable inference and conclusion drawn from the same, *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.*

Sirs, it is an inestimable blessing to have the true knowledge of Christ. We cannot acquire it by all our efforts put together: it is a gift which cometh from the Lord: it is a supernatural gift, which is only bestowed on the elect; by it we are admitted into the secrets of the Most High. We are wholly passive in the reception of it: the Son of God bestows it on us: so it is expressed here, *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* Unless as connected with *the Son of God*, we are to include *the Divine Father* also: which I confess I am inclined to do; and that for this reason—Because as we read on, the apostle saith, *and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* And it is the Father who reveals his Son in us: as it is Christ who makes himself known to us: as it is the Holy Ghost who takes of the things of Christ, and by the same, He glorifies and exalts the Lord Jesus in us. So that we are indebted to each of the Divine Persons, for the true knowledge of Christ: it being, as truly as salvation is, the free gift of sovereign, election, immutable grace: it is one of the choicest blessings of everlasting love. Let the *giving us an understanding* be applied to *the Son of God*, or to *the Divine Father*, yet the subject comes all to one point in this particular, that the Lord *hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* This is the Son of God himself, that we know; and a new understanding hath been given us, that we might know Him. And He is *true.* He is what He declared himself to be—what the apostles declared of Him—what the Father and the Spirit have declared of Him, and concerning Him, throughout the whole inspired volume; even that He is immutably and unchangeably *true.* And what is the substance of all this? I reply, it is, He is *the Son of God.* He is *the true Messiah.* He is *the Christ of God.* He is *the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in truth and love.* The whole scripture declares Him to be all this: it is a revelation of Him, in the which the whole of this is recorded. And all this Christ is. And when we have an understanding given us to know Him, then we most freely confess our belief of Him, in all these particulars, so far as it is called for from us. It is from the scriptures we know Him to be all this, and what He is. It is through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we receive the substance of all contained herein, into our hearts. In the truth of this, the Father gives us the knowledge of Him, as his Son—As our Head—our Life—our Salvation—our Portion—our Treasure—our Fulness—our Perfection—our Inheritance—our All. He *hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* I will pass on to my next particular: which is,

3. To shew, and endeavour to express the blessedness of this know-

ledge, and the effect which accompanies the same : which is this—A real apprehension and confidence, that we are *in Christ* ; which in the words before us, is thus expressed, and confessed. *And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.*

No words on earth, nor praises in heaven can ever express the blessedness contained in what the apostle is here setting before us. I will first take up these words, *And we are in him that is true*, and unite them with the former part of the verse. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true.* It is here to be observed, that the knowledge of *the Son of God*, the giving us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, goes before our knowing our interest in Him. The cause must precede the effect which it produces. Our knowledge of Christ, as that which produces in us everlasting life, must be before we can have the experience, that we are possessed of life everlasting in our own souls ; for Christ himself saith, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* But we must have the knowledge of Him, before we can believe on Him : it being the true knowledge of Christ, which produces faith in Him. It is so in all the blessedness which is contained in the knowledge we have, of our union to his Person ; our interest in his salvation ; and in our real and personal communion with Him. As we have the scriptural knowledge of the Son of God, this lays the foundation of the knowledge we have of our interest in Him. This is not built upon any precarious foundation : this cannot be, because the love of the Father, the Person of his Son, the covenant acts which obtained between them from everlasting, the transactions betwixt them in the fulness of time, with the clear and full revelation of the same in the everlasting gospel, are the foundation of all true faith and hope in God. It is in agreement with the same, that we are brought, any of us, to the true knowledge of Christ, and that we are in Him ; and it is from hence we know our personal interest in Him. The words before us express the truth of this, that we are in Him that is true, and also that we have the knowledge of this. *He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true.* It is too common with us to be more concerned to know our interest in Christ, than we are to know his interest in us. We too much overlook what is contained in the true knowledge of Christ. Most assuredly it is the knowledge of what Christ is in his own Person, as God-Man, is that which alone should have the first, and highest place in our minds : then what He is as the glorious Mediator, Head, and Saviour, may well be considered by us : then the blessedness which must be contained in His union to his church, and His communion with his church : and then it follows, that as our eternal life is in Him, so it constitutes a great part of our happiness, to know that we are one with Him. The blessedness of being in Christ, can never be fully comprehended. No ; not even in the fullest enjoyment which the saints will ever have of it when they see Christ by sense and vision. To have no existence but in Christ, to have being and well-being in Christ, and to enjoy to the very perfection of all this, in our minds, by being for ever with the Lord, this is blessedness inexpressible. It exceeds now, and will do so in glory, our uttermost conceptions. It is the fruit of the Father's everlasting love to us in Christ, from ever-

lasting. As the knowledge of Christ goes before our knowledge of our personal interest in Him, so we have the aspirations of the apostle *Paul's* mind on this subject, expressed by himself thus: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 8, 9. I remember being once in company, and the death of Christ was the subject; and it was expressed how acceptable the subject had been on the day which was then passed. I took the liberty of proposing this question—Pray, Madam, which are you most taken with, the death of Christ, or your interest in it? the reply was, With my interest in it. I said, I thought so: yet so am not I. Not to lessen the due importance, and inexpressible grace of interest in Christ, yet, most assuredly, there is more in the death of Christ, than is in the salvation of the whole election of grace. If it be not so, our Lord cannot be what He is revealed to be in the scriptures: and if His Person, blood and righteousness, do not exceed in worth, in perfection, in value and good, the whole contained in the persons, sins, and emptiness of his people, we are most wretchedly off. Beloved, Christ's Person, as God-Man, Head, and Mediator, exceeds all the worth of the persons of the elect, even considering them as the beloved of God. Let their souls in value be what they may, this can bear no comparison with the most precious blood of Christ. The Death of Christ must therefore be a greater subject, than the very salvation of the elect which hath been finished thereby. So on the very same consideration, the knowledge of Christ, must exceed our belief of our interest in Him. Nor can we have the true knowledge of the one without the other: indeed high estimation in the spiritual mind of the death of Christ, is undoubted evidence of the soul's interest therein. I fear there is a great deal of self-deceit and flattery with many, who will, who do assert they know Christ died for them; persuading themselves so, under natural influence—That they are Christ's—That they know they have an interest in Him. I have no doubt but some keep up this in their very dying moments, in the very case and frame in the which all this is most awful delusion. Beloved, I do not mean to suggest, that the real believer does not know, from the word and Spirit, his interest in Christ: no; if I meant so, the words before me, would be point blank against me, it being declared in them, that *those who believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God*, have the knowledge of this: and also that this is brought into the mind in a way of believing. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.*

The true knowledge of the Son of God, contains in it, all blessings, and blessedness: that which accompanies this is, a real apprehension, and confidence that we are *in Christ*; because what we know of Him, no natural mind or thoughts can reach—The glories of his Person attract us—His love inflames us—His salvation suits us—We are lifted by it out of ourselves—We behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—We have an inward sense of all this, so as that we cannot but say, individually for ourselves, *Whom have I, O Jesus, in heaven but*

*thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* As we are led, from the word and by the Holy Ghost, into the true knowledge of Christ and his salvation, as made known in the revelation of grace, and the grant of the same, and the record which the ever-blessed Trinity have made thereof in the everlasting gospel, we read very clearly Christ's interest in us, and our interest in Him : which answers to that which is here expressed to us in these words, *and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* To apprehend my interest in Christ, arising from his interest in me ; and to understand from the scriptures of Truth that Christ's interest in me, is founded upon his union to my person, and that this is the fruit of the Father's everlasting love ; and under the testimony of the Holy Ghost, bearing his witness for Christ, and testimony to my spirit, that Christ is mine, and that I am His ; this is the only sure and safe way of my knowing, and believing that I am in Christ. And hereby I am saved from the natural deceit of my own mind : whereas, any other way of believing, and professing interest in the Son of God is, to say the least of it, very precarious, and uncertain. Surely it must be the peculiar royalty of the Holy Spirit, in the economy of the covenant, established in the mind and will of God before all worlds, to ascertain this great point in the believer's mind—that he is one with Christ, and personally interested in Him. *And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ*—In whom we were chosen from everlasting—In whom we were blessed, accepted, and predestinated to the adoption of children—In whom we were redeemed—By whom we have been preserved, and called—In whom we have everlasting life, righteousness, and purity—In whom we are eternally complete. We are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* Then God cannot express greater love towards us : neither can we be more secure in Christ, than we are, by being in Him. Nor can we ever enjoy, or be partakers of greater blessedness, than what is contained in this. To have an understanding given us, to know Him that is true, and that to this very end, that we may know we are in Him that is true ; even to know and enjoy the blessedness and blessings contained herein—there is nothing in earth, or heaven can exceed this. May the Lord give us the realizing evidence of the same in our own minds, from his word, and by his Spirit. I come

4. To observe, this most adorable Person, the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in Truth and love, is the True God, and Eternal Life. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.* This is the apostle's seal to the true, and proper, and Essential Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ : which in the scriptures of the Old Testament, so clearly shines forth, as that he who runs may read : and which by the writers of the New Testament is thus fully declared, as He therein is called *The great God. The living God. The true God. The only wise God.* And Paul declares him to be, *over all, God blessed for ever* : and he sets his *Amen* unto it. He also says, that *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-*



*head.* see Tit. ii. 13 : Heb. iii. 12 : our text : Jude 25 : Rom. ix. 5 : Col. ii. 9. This is the glory of the gospel, and of every truth and doctrine contained in it—That Christ is God—True and very God—One in the same incomprehensible Godhead with the Father and the Spirit—The Creator of all worlds, beings, and things—The upholder of all things visible and invisible—The only Saviour: even He who says of, and from Himself, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.” Isai. xliii. 11. May the Lord set his own seal to this truth on our hearts. Our Jesus is *the true God*. He is *Eternal Life*. It is his Godhead stamps the whole of his work with dignity, majesty, perfection, and efficacy. May his Truth at all times dwell richly in us: and may He dwell by his Truth in us, as the true God, and everlasting life: yea, as *eternal life*. *He is the true God and eternal life*. May we continually live in the belief of this. Amen.

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## SERMON XCIII.

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*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.—I JOHN v. 21.*

BELOVED, this being our last Sermon on this Epistle, and the text being short, I conceive it will not be unacceptable to sum up, and give a brief account of the various subjects contained in the same. In the 1st chapter the apostle sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ, in the eternity and excellency of his Person: he styles Him *the Word which was from the beginning: that eternal life which was with the Father*. He speaks of Him as He stands in relation to the Father, styling Him *the Son of God*. So that included in this, and as connected with the same, follows an account of that blessed communion saints have with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. I would next observe that the apostle makes, throughout the whole of this Epistle, a vast distinction between such as were born again, and such as were not: shewing how the former were most divinely influenced by the truths of the everlasting gospel, which they had both received and believed: and how others who were but mere professors, not having received the same through the channel of regeneration and faith, these truths were so far from being operative within them; that such were in great danger of falling by their besetting sin, and returning to their former ways and courses, and also of renouncing the faith: it being an apostatizing age. This was occasioned by the many antichrists which were then newly sprung up; all of whom had been in the churches: so that they had been under the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and church government. Yet these, under the influence of their own inherent and corrupt passions, broke violently off from the churches of the saints, with a design to scatter and disperse the real saints of the Most High: and also that they might have

the greater opportunity of spreading their pernicious errors. These consisted in denying Christ was come in the flesh—In corrupting the doctrines of the ever-blessed Trinity—In opposing this fundamental doctrine, at it regarded the Person of the Messiah; that He was the Son of God: thus they denied his eternal power and Godhead. The apostle expresses, how real saints were most safely and most divinely preserved from these damnable errors, they having received an Unction from the Holy One. He then exhorts them to abide in the doctrine and ordinances of Christ. He gives an account of the three distinct ages of christianity, in *babes*, *young men*, and *fathers*; as also of that which was the most distinguishing grace in each of these. If you read the 2nd chapter with care, you will find this general account of it, to be an outline of the same: in it is expressed, what was produced by the Holy Ghost, through the true knowledge of the Father's love, and Son's salvation, in the minds, lives, and conversations of such as had communion with the Father and the Son; and also how destitute those were of this, who were but bare professors. His thus distinguishing between the one and the other, will be the true standard for the church of Christ to judge its members by, down to the very end of time. In the next chapter, the apostle, as it seems to me, makes a distinct division of such as were of the antichristian party, and those who were sound in the faith. It is such as turned apostates, renounced Christ, and had joined the antichrists of that age, that he, as I conceive, pronounces to have sinned the devil's sin, which he afterwards styles, *the sin unto death*. He says, "he that committeth sin is of the devil." chap. iii. 8: such an one sinneth the sin against the Holy Ghost, which sin is unto eternal death. Then, as I apprehend it, the apostle distinguishes between the children of God, and such; he lays a great emphasis on the same; he styles one, *the children of God*, the other, *the children of the devil*. The one, the child of God, is born of God, and loveth his brother: the other character is not born of God, and hateth his brother: he is as *Cain* was, of that *wicked one*: he is in a state of death: he hateth his brother: he is a murderer. The new-born love the brethren; they walk in the ways of righteousness; they love in deed and in truth. The apostle, in the 4th chapter, speaks of such as were preachers, and distinguishes those who were on the Lord's side, and those who were not. The antichrists, the false prophets, those who were not of God, were such as denied the Deity of Christ—The Humanity of Christ, and the Messiahship of Christ. Those who were the true ministers of Christ, confessed his Incarnation; acknowledged him to be the Son of God, and professed his Godhead. He then draws a line of distinction between the hearers of the true gospel and such as were of the same Spirit with himself, and others, who were the deniers of Christ and his Godhead, who were worldly men, and so were their hearers also. The apostle distinguishes between preacher and preacher, expressing who were sound, and who were unsound, thus—Every one that professed Christ was *the true Messiah*, he was a witness for Jesus: and every one who denied Christ was come in the flesh, was an *antichrist*, and therefore not to be attended unto; but was wholly and entirely to be rejected. He then draws a line of distinction, between the hearers of the true gospel from the apostles and those who were of the same Spirit and with the same Spirit he was possessed of, and the others who were deniers of Christ and his Godhead. He says they were worldly men: they spake

of the world: the world, says he, heareth them. As to such as knew God, they were hearers of the true doctrine which the apostles taught: and hereby was evidenced the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error. He then exhorts the saints to love one the other, from the consideration of God's love to them in Christ Jesus. He sets down this, and he departs not from it—That keeping the commandments of God; an abstinence from evil; an invincible hatred to all sin, are the effects of having the truths of the everlasting gospel dwelling in us. He declares (chap. third) that sin is the transgression of God's law: it is the work of the devil—Such as commit it, are the children of the devil—Christ became incarnate to destroy it—No evil can be like unto it, as it is an interruption to communion with God—Therefore saints on these considerations, cannot but avoid it—To walk with God, as our Father in Christ Jesus, is an evidence of our adoption into the family of God—It also is a proof of the truth and sincerity of our faith—It is the very fruit and effect of the same—So also is our love to the brethren—This should not be merely verbal, it should be real and sincere, even to the laying down our lives for the brethren, if the Lord calls us thereunto. This is the substance of the third chapter: only I must add this to the same—That the vast expressions of God's love to us, are motives for the drawing out our expressions of love to Him: which we express in our love to the saints for his sake. I believe we have now an outline of the subjects contained in this chapter. In this 5th, which is the last chapter, we have our love to the brethren set before us, as the fruit of our new-birth into Christ—That it is an effect of God's love, in the which we keep his commandments, which are not grievous to such as are born of God. Such as overcome the false prophets and antichrists, are said to do so, in and by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Then an infallible Scripture evidence is given of the Messiahship and Sonship of Christ. An account is given of the six Witnesses, Three in heaven, and three in earth; who unite in one and the same testimony concerning Christ's Person, and Messiahship: and that there is eternal life in Him. From hence it follows, He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. The apostle declares his end and design of his writing this Epistle. Then he gives some very excellent advice. He expresseth the state of the whole world out of Christ. He affirms, in defiance to the antichrists of that present day—that the Son of God was come—That He is the true God and eternal life: and closes the whole with these words, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* Having given you the general view of the subjects contained in each chapter of this Epistle; and having also, in these lectures, sermonized the same; all which now remains is, to open and explain these closing words unto you. They are exhortatory: in the which a great subject is contained. They are an exhortation delivered by the apostle in a very affectionate manner. It is very short, but very comprehensive. I will consider it in the following order.

1. The affectionate manner in which the apostle delivers the same. *Little children.*

2. The exhortation itself, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols:* to the which he adds the word, *Amen.* In going through these, I will consider the exhortation itself; and also what is contained in the same. May the Lord grant us light, and his blessing to conduct us

through the whole of this which hath been proposed, as the particular subjects for our present contemplation. I now enter on the explanation of these; and will attempt to proceed,

1. To set before you the affectionate manner, in which the apostle here addresseth himself—*Little children*.

This mode of expression, this apostle seems most greatly to have delighted in. The words are in this most affectionate manner used by him, as an introduction to an exhortation which he is about to deliver unto them—*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*. But it is the address which is now before me, which I am to improve upon—*Little children*. This mode of address is almost peculiar to our apostle *John*. He makes very continued use of it, so that it seems as if he wished to be known, by his thus addressing himself to those he wrote unto. We have, *Little children* over and over, in and throughout the whole of this Epistle; it is sometimes used by him as a general term for all the saints, whom he addresseth: and sometimes he uses it by way of distinguishing such as were but *babes in Christ*: and sometimes he adds a word to this title, to signify, as it seems, his own personal interest in some of these, as if they were seals to his own personal ministry: and it sometimes flows from the apostle, as the free effusion of his own heart's love, as if he knew no better way of expressing it. Here and there, it is *My little children*, which seems to intend some very particular regard and concern for them, more and beyond what he had for others. But let this question be asked, From whence came it originally, and how is it that this apostle distinguishes it by his frequent repetitions? even more than might have been expected? The reply is this; he had heard his Lord and Master express himself in the same terms: it was thus on a very solemn season: when being present with eleven of his disciples, amongst which number *John* was one, the precious Saviour addressed them thus, *Little children*. see John xiii. 33. This was a little before his Passion. There was so much of Christ's heart in this expression, as *John* could never forget: he therefore treasured up this very short word and sentence which dropped from his most precious Lord, in his own memory: and his heart having been warmed with it, he took a peculiar pleasure in addressing the saints and beloved of the Lord, in the same manner, and with the same words, with which his blessed Lord, had addressed all the elect apostles: for *Judas Iscariot* was not at this time present. It gave the apostle peculiar delight so to do. What mode of address, could have conveyed to the persons addressed, more of the heart of the apostle towards them? We may most certainly say, none; it is full of affection: there is the uttermost simplicity in it. As also it is a most engaging way, to attract the spiritual mind: nothing can suit better, when exhortations and cautions are to be administered; therefore he employs it on all occasions, when these are the subjects before him. He employs it on all these occasions, to the end that real saints may be engaged in the practice of what they are exhorted unto. As for example, when he would dissuade the saints from sin, he says, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*. chap. ii. 1. When he would give all those that he wrote this Epistle unto, a title, and by the same an item of his utmost love for them, he then says, *I write unto you, little children*. see v. 12. This he most assuredly took up from Christ himself: He having, as hath been before observed, addressed the eleven

apostles with these words, *Little children*. As this belonged unto them all; and Christ at once distinguished them by, and gave them all this title, so doth *John*; he saying unto them, *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*. And also when our apostle expresseth himself to such as we account the very weakest in the school of Christ, and family of heaven, it is in the same way, *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father*. v. 13. So it also is, when the apostle gives the alarm, that it is *the last time, or hour* of that state of the church in the which he lived and the then present saints were in, which was evident by the many *antichrists* then in the world; he uses this term—*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time*. v. 18. And thus at the conclusion of this same chapter, when he exhorts the saints to a continuation in the truths of Christ's gospel, and in the ordinances of the same, he saith, *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*. v. 28. So in the 3rd chapter of this Epistle, when he warns saints, that they be not deceived by *false teachers*, he uses the same sweet address, *Little children, let no man deceive you*. v. 7. Also when he would have them love one another in deed and in truth, he expresseth himself in these sweet terms, *My little children*. v. 18. Also when he speaks of true believers in Christ, that they had overcome the false teachers, and doctrines, in that present day, he uses the same expressions; *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*. chap. iv. 4. And he closes this his Epistle, addressing all he wrote unto, whom he had declared in the 13th verse of this his last chapter in it, to be believers in the Name of the Son of God, with this same sweet expression, *Little children*. It most certainly implies, his most peculiar affection for them, and regard unto them; that he loved them for the Lord's sake. The apostle seems to have taken up this expression, *little children*, from Christ Himself, so he could not but have found a peculiar sweetness in the same: this, without all doubt, made him so greatly delight in the use of it, as it naturally led him to think, on the love of Christ towards all his saints. He viewed them all, as equally, and individually precious in their Lord's sight—That they were the body of Christ—The beloved of God—The sons and daughters of *the Lord God Almighty*. The very term, *Little children*, could not but remind him, of their union to Christ, of their communion with Christ—of their being righteous in Him—holy in Him—that they were sinless in Him—that they were pure in his most precious blood—that they were complete in Christ—that they were accepted in Him—that they were represented in Him, and by Him—that the saints had all one Father; one and the same Saviour; also one and the same Sanctifier—That they had one and the same Leader, and Guide—one and the same everlasting home, dwelling-place and habitation. Therefore the apostle could not but love them, he being one of them. It was most truly pleasing to him to be of any, of the least spiritual assistance unto them, to encourage their minds, to guard them from error and heresies, to comfort their hearts. Thus to serve them, was the very delight of his soul: his very heart was in all this. That they might want no proof and evidence of this, nor the

church of Christ to the very close of time, he so often repeats this term, *Little children, My little children*, and even closes this Epistle with the same—*My little children, or, Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* This brings me to my

2nd Particular: under which I will aim to attend to the exhortation itself; also to what is contained in the same: and will notice the word *Amen*, with which he seals all contained in the whole of this Epistle, and this his exhortation. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*—I will first consider these words as an exhortation: then what is contained and expressed in it: and what may be understood by the *idols*, regarding which we are called upon so to act as to keep ourselves from the same.

I would, *First*, attend to the words as an exhortation. As such, it may be, we cannot have a better apprehension of them, than by looking into the last chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*: where the apostle *Paul* saith, v. 22, “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words:” which may be considered as referring to all contained in that Epistle; and if so, it must hereby have been suggested unto them, that it would be of great use and benefit to their minds, to pay strict attention unto all contained in the same. If the words before us, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*: are to be viewed as an exhortation, we might then consider the same, as referring to all those most important truths, which are contained in and throughout the whole of this most sublime Epistle. Then it would follow, that the *idols* which saints are to keep themselves from, must be those false doctrines and teachers, which had been expressed and exposed in this Epistle. It must be acknowledged, the words before us do not seem to have any connection with the former verse; neither with the other parts of this Epistle, in any immediate manner: yet as they are the closing words, with which the whole of it is finished, they most assuredly deserve our attention: and what to call them, by way of distinguishment, except by the term *exhortation*, I know not. I will therefore content myself with that form of expression, and treat them as such. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* As we consider these words as an exhortation, they contain a general caution to all the saints, to keep themselves from *idols*: that is, as I apprehend the same, from all sorts of will-worship, and false doctrines of every sort.

I will aim, *Secondly*, to consider what is expressed and also contained in these words, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* We cannot but understand, that whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine, and contrary to the will of God respecting his worship, must in the general sense and meaning of the same, be comprized in the term *idols*. If we thus understand the words, as the general meaning of them, we shall not, in so doing, wholly miss the apostle’s meaning. The antichrists, false prophets, and heretics in that day, who depraved, and withstood the doctrines of the Lord and Saviour, and corrupted his most holy and instituted worship, by their profane mixtures, might most certainly deserve to be called idolaters. And the giving in to them, and yielding to what they had to say, was to follow idols; as their worship might well be termed idolatry. The apostle therefore might well dissuade the saints from having any fellowship with these, saying, *Little children,*

*keep yourselves from idols.* It was worthy of the apostle, to express himself in this exhortation, and that by way of caution, even to saints as such. We have *Paul* also, acting agreeably unto this: he addresses himself to the saints at *Corinth*, thus: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry:" see 1 Cor. x. 14. It is true, he introduces his exhortation on a particular subject; and it concerned such as were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not suited to their most holy profession, that they should on any pretence whatsoever, eat and drink in an idol temple, of what had been offered to idols. Nor would he have them eat and drink with idolaters, any more than he would have them to have fellowship with devils: for says he, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." v. 21. That he might more completely rouse their minds to the subject which he is setting before them, he puts the following questions to these persons. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" v. 22.

I will now, so far as my light reaches, aim to express what those *idols* are, which we are called upon to reject, and also how we are to keep ourselves from them. I cannot but conceive, that the idols, the apostle *John* is to be understood as speaking of, were the antichrists, false prophets and teachers, of whom he had spoken in this Epistle. They, and their followers and doctrines were accursed: for they denied that Christ was the Son of God: they disowned Him as the true Messiah: they rejected Him as the True God, and Eternal Life. He might therefore with the greatest propriety, give this general advice to all the saints, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* And it will be necessary, so long as there are *Arians*, *Socinians*, and *Antitrinitarians* amongst us, to give the same caution to all the holy brethren: as all these, let them otherwise be what they may, are idolaters. The *Arian* is an idolater: so is the *Socinian*: so is the *Antitrinitarian*. The *Arian* is an idolater by his denial of the Godhead of Christ—The *Socinian*, by his denying Christ to be any thing otherwise than a mere man. He who denies the doctrine of the Trinity, or is a depraver of the same, is an idolater. All those who corrupt the scripture doctrine of the Trinity, denying the Persons in the Godhead, and their Personal distinctions; or by interpretation of what they say on the subject, if contrary to the revelation and statement of the same, as given us in the Scriptures of Truth; they are all idolaters: and as such they are to be avoided: their blasphemies are to be rejected. We ought not to have, nor to hold any communion with them: such we should so avoid, as not to eat with them. These ought never to be admitted to the Lord's Table: such, the saints, on no pretence whatsoever, should ever admit to church communion: neither should they ever be admitted with them to the Table of the Lord. I do not mean that none of these, may be brought off their errors: and that to a total renunciation of the same: there is nothing impossible with God. But so long as they remain, and abide in such doctrines, as set aside the Person, and Essential Godhead, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, not an individual of them, ought by any means to be attended on, by those who know the Lord: nor be admitted into communion with any of the churches of the saints. These words therefore, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen;* may well be considered as an address to all the churches of the saints: and they may

well, with the utmost tenderness be exhorted in the words of our apostle before us, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* And surely, as the words going before were these, *This is the true God, and eternal life*, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the exhortation may be very properly applied to the shunning all idolaters; as the apostle had immediately said before, *we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.* He having eternal life essentially in Himself, and the apostle coming in on this solemn declaration—*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*: surely he can be no other than an idolater, who denies the Godhead of Christ: and this all those must be, who are open depravers of the doctrine of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity—Of the Person, Godhead, and Salvation of our most precious Lord Jesus Christ, under whatsoever pretence may be assigned for the same.

I would now more particularly review the exhortation itself, with that which is more particularly contained in the same, as immediately suited unto us, on whom the ends of the world are come. The apostle says to us, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* If we explain this, the question must be, What those idols were which the apostle exhorts us to keep ourselves from; for I cannot think he means outward idolatry: it does not enter into my mind to conceive, the saints to whom this Epistle was sent, could be in danger of falling into this; neither are we. It is true, idolatry may be committed, and we may fall into the same, by giving way to ourselves, and by an over and above opinion of ourselves, and by entertaining too great an estimation of ourselves: that this is idolatry in the sight of God, and that there is great danger of falling hereby, I most readily grant and give in to all this. If we say then, the world, the flesh, and the devil are our sworn enemies; that they are continually withstanding us; that they are our most desperate foes; and that we are in continual danger from them; and that our being at times under their influence, taken up, carried away, and intoxicated with the things of time and sense, hath in the nature of the same, that which alienates the heart and affections from God, and that this cannot but be idolatry in the sight of God, I cannot but yield to this, and confess it to be even so: and I must fall down before the Lord and cry out *guilty, guilty.* I therefore conclude these are amongst the number of idols which the apostle would have the saints keep themselves from. Therefore he most kindly and with the uttermost affection warns us of and cautions us against them, saying to us, as truly as he did unto those whom he wrote unto, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* Fornication, evil concupiscence, uncleanness, covetousness, and every inordinate affection, is idolatry. These are therefore to be avoided, resisted, and renounced: it is with these we commit idolatry, when they captivate our hearts and affections: these therefore, in a very special manner, are the *idols*, which the apostle would have the saints keep themselves from. Whilst I cannot contradict this, but look on the same as included and intended, and it seems very expressly and particularly to suit us: yet I would add to this; I rather think still, not to omit any one thing which I have already set before you, that it is something distinct from this, which the apostle must here design, when he



here says, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* And why may it not, in its utmost sense and meaning, be designed to be a caution against a total apostacy from the outward profession of Christ? Most certainly all which I have spoken in opening the words as an exhortation, and setting forth what is contained in the same, shews they have that in the nature of them which makes way for, and in any left of God, must issue in this. It cannot be denied, that placing our minds and affections on any object, or subject for delight, short of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, is in the nature of it, idolatry. So, therefore, as it respects what we style *besetting sin*, when we go to it for pleasure, and fall willingly by it, this is to make an idol of the same: and as it were, in effect to say, there is not a sufficiency in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father's love in Him, to make us happy: yet we at the same time are ready to say, it hath been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. It is most solemnly awful, but true it is, and I should think the same reaches unto, and is at times the case with all the saints, that what hath been suggested and expressed, is to be lamented by each and every one of them. Yet I should conceive the apostle must rather have his eye upon false doctrine, and will-worship: which, as it immediately strikes at the honour and dignity of Christ, so it is very well expressed, by cautioning saints to give no countenance unto the same; saying to one and all of them, and all who were under the same profession of Truth with them, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* An idol, in the true and proper meaning of it, is any thing worshipped in the room of the true God; and particularly an image of the true God—that is, a false God. The apostle says to the church of Christ at *Corinth*, “Now as touching things offered unto idols,” (we know that an idol is nothing) “we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” 1 Cor. viii. 1—6. As this apostle, here speaking in the name of the whole church, and his own, says, *we know that an idol is nothing in the world*, I should conceive that our apostle *John*, when he says, *keep yourselves from idols*, must mean, the errors, and damnable heresies in that day. He saith, *keep yourselves from idols*: by which I apprehend we are to understand, that saints should not frequent the assemblies of those who are not sound in the faith of the gospel—That there ought not to be any association with such; nor the least attention given unto them, nor unto their errors, and heresies: being fully persuaded these must all have originally sprung from the father of lies, the devil—That they are all directly, or indirectly, and in every sense, opposite to the Person, work, offices, honour and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it would not then, neither will it do in this present day, to cavil with such persons

who might, or may at any time bring these errors and heresies into the churches of the saints ; but they are to be openly renounced altogether : and no peace is to be maintained with such : nor should any place be found for them in any of the churches of Jesus Christ. This is our best and only way to keep ourselves from idols ; from all false doctrine, will-worship, and every other evil of this kind : and it is this, as I suppose, the apostle is here speaking of ; and is here directing saints how they should keep themselves from the same : *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen ;*

Which word, *Amen*, with which the apostle concludes his exhortation and this Epistle, I will endeavour to say something of. It has been frequently joined by me in my quoting the text, and that with express design : therefore let it not be blotted out as too redundant : I conceive it ought to be as it is, as containing the apostle's seal to the exhortation to the whole Epistle : and as it were, a prayer subjoined to this exhortation ; as expressing his desire that the saints might observe, and obey the instruction given them, and keep themselves from idols. The word *Amen* ; we have it in the Old Testament, in the 5th chapter of *Numbers* ; where it is mentioned for the first time. And we have it doubled : it is in the case of the suspected wife, unto whom the Priest, according to the Lord's command was to administer the bitter water : at which time he was to express an execration ; and the woman was to say, *Amen, amen.* see verses 16—22. This was, as thus expressed, an oath : or, *so let it be ; or, so it shall be.* In the 28th chapter of *Jeremiah*, v. 6, the prophet said *Amen* to what the false prophet *Hananiah* had uttered, with respect to the restoration of the people very soon from the yoke of the king of *Babylon* : which, though *Jeremiah* knew it to be a lie, he said *Amen* to, that all present might fully know and apprehend that he was no enemy to the church nor state : he also explains the word *Amen*—*So be it.* This word is made use of frequently in worshipping the Lord, in *The Book of Psalms* : and it is frequently doubled, *Amen, and Amen.* We have it in the New Testament : it is one of the Names of Christ—“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” Rev. iii. 14. He is the God of Truth. He is the very substance of all revealed Truth. He is the true Prophet. All the promises are *Yea, and Amen in Him.* 2 Cor. i. 20. It is a word frequently used in the worship of the Three in Jehovah, in *The Book of the Revelation.* The whole testimony of God is established by his word and oath : it is all sealed by the blood, and Spirit of Christ : therefore as the word *Amen*, hath in one part of its signification, and especially when doubled, that which approaches to the solemnity of an oath, so I should like to consider it here, as used by the apostle—his apostolical seal, confirming the truth of all contained in it. I conceive this would cast glory and majesty on it. Some say, the word *Amen* is the same in all languages. The Epistles are mostly closed with it : so is *The Book of the Revelation.* Mr. Brown says, “the meaning of the word *Amen*, is in its signification, true, faithful, certain. And that our translation often renders it *verily* ; and that when it is *verily, verily*, it then resembles the form of an oath.” We close our prayers, and also when the benediction is pronounced, with it ; to express our

desires, that we may be both heard and answered by the Lord, in our requests which have been put up unto him. I would only add, the apostle's saying, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols*, and adding his *Amen*, is as a prayer on our behalf. I have now finished my lectures and comment on this *First Epistle of John*. I leave the same to your consideration. May the Lord's blessing now follow the reading the same. May the apostle's words be retained by you—*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

*April* 23, 1819.

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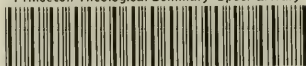






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